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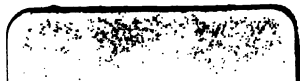
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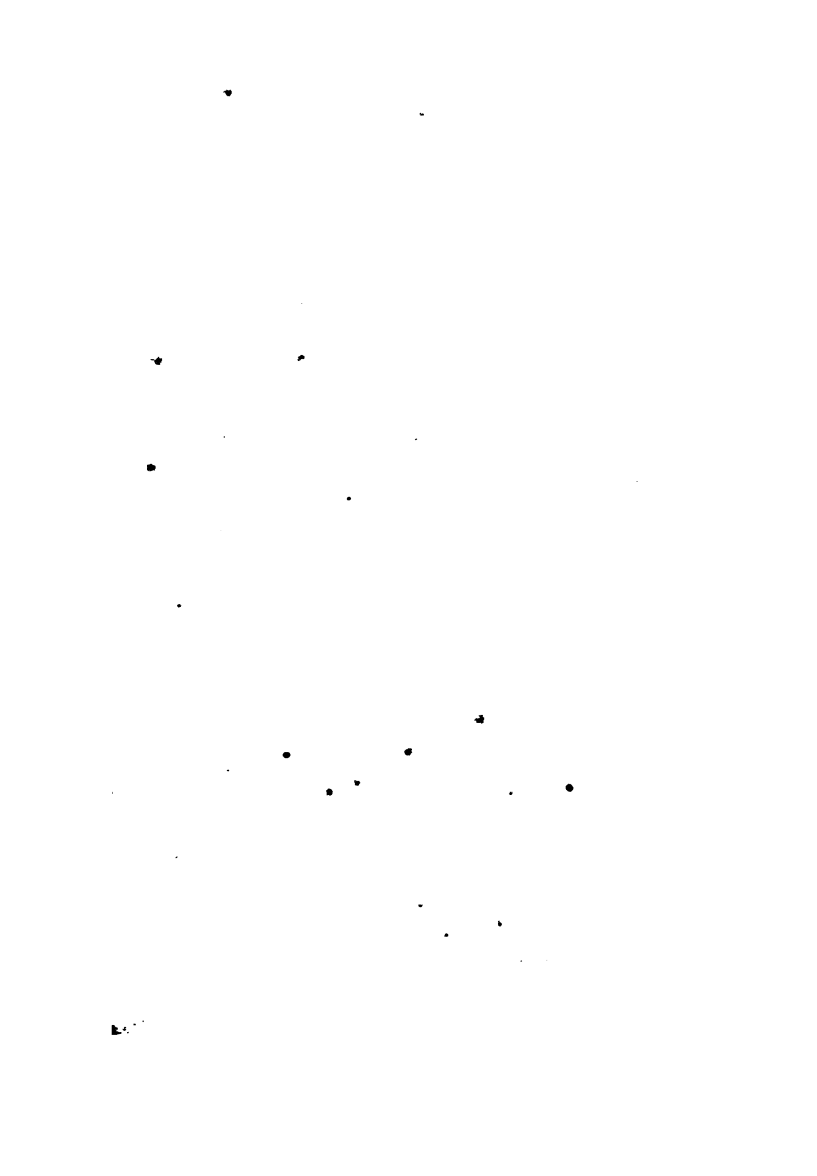




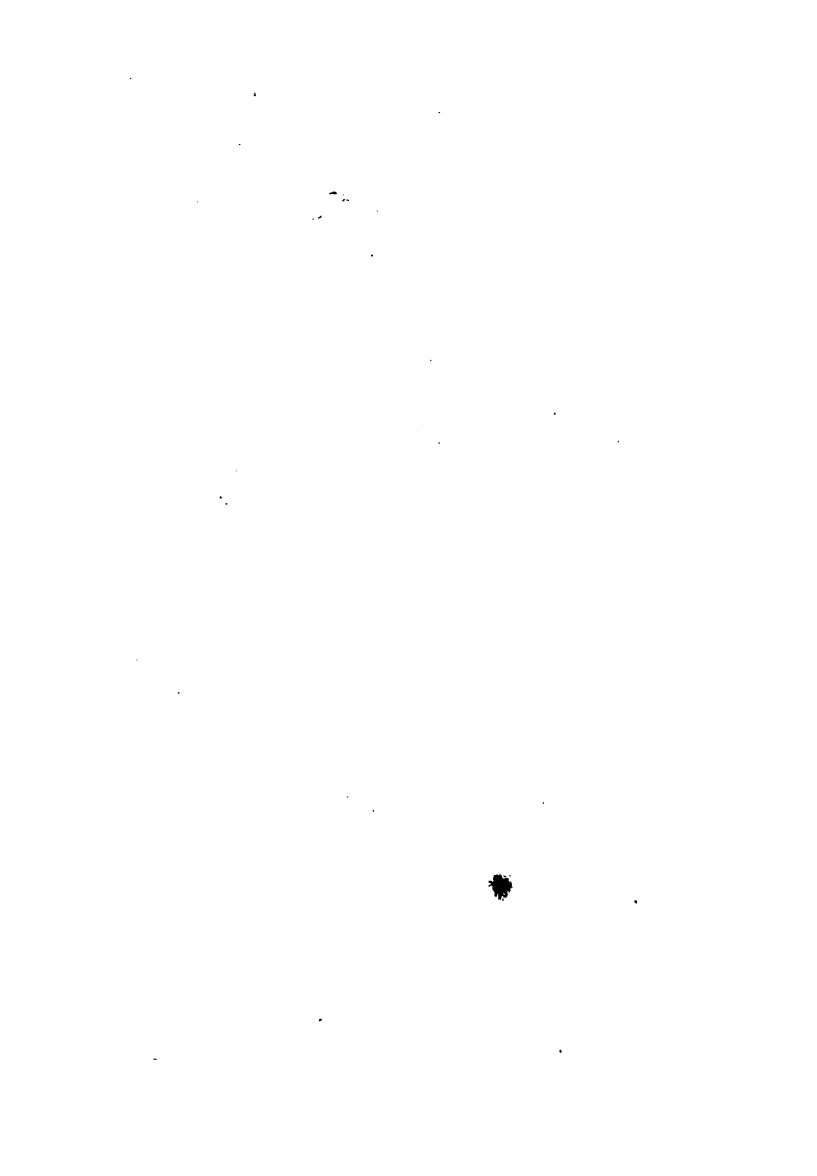
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CANTERBURY TALES,

FROM

CHAUCE R.

BY JOHN SAUNDERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

CHARLES KNIGHT & Co., LUDGATE STREET.

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CANTERBURY TALES,

FROM CHAUCER.



INTRODUCTION.

THREE different modes have been adopted by the lovers of Chaucer in their attempts to popularize his works.

First, they have modernized his poetry ; that is to say, re-written it, as poetry. Now, whenever a man shall arise possessing *exactly* the same powers, views, tastes, and individual characteristics as the great father of our literature, and will undertake to give us a new version of the Canterbury Tales, we have no doubt the task may be satisfactorily accomplished, and not till then. How Dryden failed we trust we have in some degree shown in our Remarks on the Knight's Tale ; and if such a poet could fail with a subject so peculiarly suited to him, who can ever hope, under ordinary circumstances, to succeed ?

Secondly, the *poetical* has been transformed into

a *prose* narration ; and thus the story, at least, has been freed from the difficulties and hindrances caused by antiquated words or pronunciations ; but then it has necessarily been relieved at the same time from all the subtler elements of the poetry. A still more important objection to prose versions of Chaucer is the fact that they do not, in the slightest degree, prepare the reader to throw aside, at some time or other, all such extraneous aid by gradually accustoming him to the perusal of the original text.

Thirdly, Chaucer's poetry has been presented in its own proper form, with a modernized spelling, and an accented pronunciation. Eventually, perhaps, this will be the method permanently adopted for all popular editions of the poet ; but, at present, such books attract neither the student nor the general reader : too lax for the one, they still remain — apparently — too irksome for the other.

In the following pages we have endeavoured to combine the peculiar advantages offered by the two methods last named, and to get rid of their drawbacks. We have proposed to ourselves to make the whole course of the *story* clear by resolving inconvenient or difficult passages of the poetry into prose ; but, at the same time, to allow the reader to be constantly refreshing himself from

the "well of English ~~undigged~~," by leaving all the remainder, including the finest portions of the poetry, in its own nervous and beautiful language.

In the preparation of this prose we have constantly asked ourselves these two questions, and these only:—Does it faithfully reflect the thoughts, style, and words of the original? Does it harmonize with, and glide easily into it? It will be a source of deep satisfaction to us if others are better satisfied upon these points than we ourselves can pretend to be, and if, upon the whole, the publication may in any degree lessen the period that must elapse before Chaucer shall be, through all his works, his own sole interpreter.

NOTE.—It may be useful to repeat here what has been stated in a former volume [Cabinet Pictures of English Life: Chaucer] concerning the system of accentuation, &c., we have adopted:—

1. Words in which the accent falls upon a different syllable than the one at present emphasized are marked with an acute accent, as *honour*.
2. Where additional syllables (exclusive of diphthongs) are to be sounded, without change in the spelling, or in the emphasis, they are *indicated out by the grave accent*, as *writè*, *morè*.

3. In Chaucer's time the individual sounds of both vowels, in diphthongs, appear to have been commonly preserved in speech (a custom still lingering in the north of England) and in writing such words, therefore, as creature, truely, and absolution, are marked creäture, truëly, and absolütïon and must be pronounced accordingly, just as in Leeds, to this day, bread is continually heard of as breäd, and dream as dreäm."

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

VOL. I.

B



THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

ONCE, as old stories tell, there was a duke named Theseus, the lord and governor of Athens, and who, in his time, was such a conqueror, that there was not a greater under the sun. He had won many a rich country. With his wisdom and his chivalry, he conquered all the realm of the Amazons that was formerly called Scythia,—

And wedded the freshe queen Hypolita,
and brought her, and also her young sister Emily,
home with him to his own country, with much
glory and great solemnity. And thus with vic-
tory and with melody, I^a leave this worthy duke
to ride to Athens, with all his armed hosts beside
him.

And, certes, if it were not too long to hear, I
would have told you fully in what manner the
country of the Amazons was won by Theseus and
all his chivalry, and of the great battle fought
upon the occasion betwixt the Athenians and the
Amazons, and how besieged

was Hypolita
The faire hardy queen of Scythia,

^a The Knight, as well as each of the other Canterbury Pilgrims, in telling his tale, speaks in the first person.

and of the feast that took place at her wedding,
and of the temple erected on her coming home.
But from all this I must at present forbear.

I have, God wot, a large field to ear,^b
And weake be the oxen in my plough.

The remnant of my tale is long enough.

When this duke, of whom I made mention, was
come almost to the town,

In all his weal, and in his moste pride,
He was 'warè, as he cast his eye aside,
Where that there kneelèd in the highe way
A company of ladies, tway and tway,
Each after other, clad in clothès black.
But such a cry, and such a woe they make,

that in this world there is no creature living that
ever heard such another lamentation. And of this
cry they would never cease till they had seized
the reins of his bridle.

"What folk be ye, that at my coming home, so
perturb my feast with crying?" quoth Theseus.
"Have ye such great envy of mine honour that
ye thus complain and cry? Or who hath harmed
or offended you. Do tell me, if that it may be
amended; and why ye are thus clothed in black."
Then spake the oldest lady of them all,

When she had swoonèd with a deadly cheer
That it was ruthe for to see and hear;

^b Mr. Hippenley (Chapters on Early English Literature) appends to this word the note—"To plough, I suppose from *aro*;" and Mr. Cowden Clarke says, "to till, to plough." But is it not much more likely that *to ear* means to *bring to ear—to harvest*?—I have, God wot, a large field to bring *into the ear*. Elsewhere the Knight says, he lists not to speak *of the chaff, nor the straw, but of the corn of his subject*.

She saide, " Lord, to whom Fortúne hath given
 Victory, and as a conqueror to liven,
 Nought grieveth us your glory and your honour,
 But we beseeche you, of mercy and succour.
 Have mercy on our woe and our distress.
 Some drop of pity through thy gentleness
 Upon us wretched women let now fall ;
 For certes, Lord, there n' is none of us all
 That she n' hath been a duchess or a queen ;
 Now we be caitives,^c as it is well seen :
 Thankèd be Fortune and her false wheel
 That none estate ensureth to be wele.^d

And, certes, Lord, to abide your presence here in
 this temple of the goddess Clemency, we have been
 waiting full this fortnight ;

Now help us, Lord, since it lieth in thy might.

I, wretched wight, that weep and wail thus,
 was once wife to King Capaneus that perished at
 Thebes ;

cursèd be that day !

And alle we that be in this array
 And maken all this lamentatioun,
 We losten all our husbands at that town,
 While that the siegè there abouten lay ;

and yet now, alas the while ! the old Creon—who
 is lord of the city of Thebes,—

Fulfilled of ire and of iniquity,—
 He for despite, and for his tyranny,

to do the dead bodies of all our slaughtered lords
 a dishonour, hath drawn them upon a heap, and
 will not suffer them, by no assent, neither to be
 buried * nor burnt,—

^c Wretches.

^d Well.

* We cannot better illustrate the views of the ancients on
 the subject of the burial of dead bodies, than by observing,

But maketh houndes eat them in despite."

And with that word, without more respite of their grief, they fall flat upon the ground, and cry piteously, "Have some mercy on us,—

wretched women!

And let our sorrow sinken in thine heart."

This gentle duke down from his courser start

With hearte piteous, when he heard them speak;

Him thoughte that his heart would all to-break,^f

when he saw those who had once been of such great estate so dejected and in so pitiable a condition. And he took them all up in his arms, and comforted them, in full good intent, and swore his oath, as he was a true knight, that he would do to the utmost of his power to be avenged upon the tyrant Creon, so

That all the people of Greecè shoulde speak

How Creon was of Theseus yserv'd,

As he that his death full well deserv'd.

And right anon withouten more abode

His banner he display'd, and forth he rode

To Thebes ward, and all his host beside.

No nearer would he go to Athens,

Nor take his ease fully half a day;

But onward, on his way, that night he lay;

that one of the greatest tragedies of one of the greatest of tragedians, 'The Antigone of Sophocles,' lately represented in a musical form to an English audience, turns entirely upon the misery and ruin brought on by the refusal of a king of Thebes of the rites of burial to a nephew, because he had been a traitor to his country. That king was Creon; probably the very same man that Chaucer refers to.

^f *To* is frequently used by Chaucer to augment the force of the verb to which it is prefixed. He has *to-hewen, to-burst, &c.*

and sent Hypolita the queen, and her young sister,
Emily the bright, to dwell in the town of Athens.
And forth he rides.

- The red statue of Mars with spear and targe,
So shineth in his white banner large,
That all the fieldes glitteren up and down.
And by his banner, borne is his pennón,
Of gold full rich, in which there was ybeat
The Minotaur,[§] which that he slew in Crete.
Thus rode this duke—thus rode this conqueror,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebes, and alight
Fair in a field, there as he thought to fight.

But, shortly to speak of this matter, he fought
with Creon, the king of Thebes,

——— and slew him, manly, as a knight
In plain ^h battel, and put his folk to flight,
And by assault he won the city after,
And rent adown both wall, and spar, and rafter;
And to the ladies he restor'd again
The bodies of their husbands that were slain,
To do the obséquies, as was then the guise.

But it were all too long to describe the great
clamour and the lamentation which the ladies
made at the burning of the bodies, and the great
honour that Theseus, the noble conqueror, doth to
the ladies, when they depart from him. It is my
intent to tell my tale shortly.

When that this worthy duke, this Theseus,
hath slain Creon and won Thebes,

Still in the field he took all night his rest.

§ That is to say, we presume, there was impressed on the
gold, by the *beat* of the hammer, a representation of the
Minotaur.

^h Open.

And it so befell by adventure, or by chance, that

through a window, thick of many a bar
 Of iron great, and square as any spar,
 He cast his eyen upon Emilia,
 And therewithal he blent,^k and criëd "Ha!"
 As though he stungen were unto the heart.
 And with that cry Arcite anon up start,
 And saide; "Cousin mine, what aileth thee,
 That art so pale and deadly for to see?
 Why criëst thou? who hath thee done offence?
 For Goddes love, take all in patience
 Our prison; for it may none other be;
 Fortune hath given us this adversity:
 Some wicked aspect or disposition
 Of Saturn, by some constellation,

Hath^l given us this, and would have done so,
 however we might have sworn to the contrary:—

So stood the heaven when that we were born.
 We must endure; this is the short and plain."

This Palamon answer'd, and said again,

"Cousin, forsooth of this opinion

Thou hast a vain imagination.

This prison causèd me not for to cry;

But I was hurt right now throughout mine eye

Into mine heart, that will my banè be;

The fairness of a lady that I see,

'Yond in the garden, roaming to and fro,

Is cause of all my crying and my woe:

I n'ot whe'r^m she be woman or goddèss,

But Venus is it, soothly,ⁿ as I guess."

And therewithal he fell down on his knees, and
 said,

^k Stopped suddenly.

^l "Some wicked aspect or disposition
 Of Saturn, by some constellation,
 Hath given us this, although we had it sworn.
 So stood the heaven," &c.

^m I know not whether.

ⁿ Truly.

“ Venns, if it be your will,
 You, in this garden, thus to transfigure
 Before me sorrowful wretched creature,
 Out of this prison, help that we may 'scape.
 And if so be, our destiny be shape^o
 By eternal word to dien in prison,
 Of our lin'age have some compassion
 That is so low ybrought by tyranny.”

And with that word Arcita 'gan espy
 Where as this lady roamèd to and fro.
 And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
 That if that Palamon were wounded sore,
 Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.
 And with a sigh he saide piteously,
 “ The freshè beauty slay'th me suddenly
 Of her that roameth in the yonder place ;
 And but I have her mercy and her grace
 That I may see her, at the leaste way,
 I n'am but dead, there n'is no more to say.”

When Palamon heard these words, he looked
 fiercely, and said,

“ Whe'r^p sayest thou this in earnest or in play ?”
 “ Nay,” quoth Arcite, “ in earnest by my fay ;^q

God help me, I am little inclined to sport.”—Pala-
 mon began to knit his brows ;

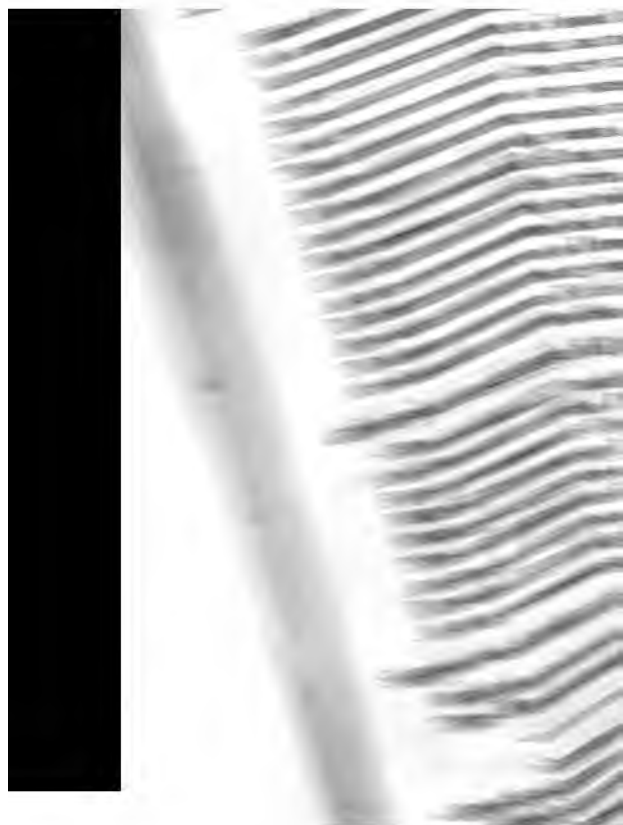
“ It were,” quoth he, “ to thee no great honóur,
 For to be false, ne for to be traitór
 To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother,
 Ysworn full deep, and each of us to other,—
 That never—for to dien in the pain^r—
 Till that the death departen shall us twain,

^o Shaped—determined.

^p Whether.

^q Faith.

^r That is to say, never though death—to dien in the pain—
 be the result of their mutual devotion.



Love is a greater law than may be
earthly man; and therefore positive

such decree
all day for love, in each degree.
st needes love, mangre ^v his head;
ot fly it, though he should be dead,
maid or widow, or elles wife,

orth. And, also, it is not likely that
thou shalt be able to stand in her
sore shall I; thou knowest well that
condemned to perpetual prison:—we
m.

as did the hounden for the bone:
ht all day, and yet their part was none:
e a kite, while that they were so wroth,
away the bone betwixt them both:
fore at the kinges court, my brother,
for himself, there is none other.*
ee lust,^v for I love, and aye shall;
dy, levè brother, this is all.
his prison musten we endure,
of us take his adventure."

the strife, and long, betwixt these two,
eisure to describe it. But to the effect.
on a day, a worthy Duke named Pe-
had been companion to the Duke
a the day that they had been little
e to Athens to visit him,
o play as he was wont to do;
s world he lovèd no man so,

^v *In spite of*
er rule, ^v Please or desire.

Neither of us in love to hinder other,
 Ne in none other case, my levè^{*} brother;
 But that thou shouldest truly further me
 In every case, as I should further thee;
 This was thine oath, and mine also, certain;
 I wot it well, thou dar'st it not withsain:
 Thus art thou of my counsel, out of doubt,
 And now thou wouldest falsely be about
 To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
 And ever shall till that mine hearte starve.[†]
 Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so:
 I lov'd her first, and tolde thee my woe
 As to my counsel and my brother sworn,
 To further me, as I have told befor;
 For which thou art ybounden as a knight
 To helpen me, if it lie in thy might;
 Or elles art thou false, I dare well say."

Arcite spake again full proudly,

"Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather false than I;
 And thou art false, I tell thee—utterly;
 For *par amour*^{*} I loved her first ere thou.
 What wilt thou say? thou wistest not right now
 Whether she were a woman or a goddèss:
 Thine is affection of holiness,
 And mine is love as to a creature,
 For which I tolde thee mine adventure
 As to my cousin and my brother sworn.

Suppose even that thou didst love her first:

Wott'st thou not well, the olde clerke's saw[‡]
 That—Who shall give a lover any law?

^{*} Dear.

[†] Die.

[‡] Hence the modern English word that has gradually become so debased in its application—paramour.

[§] In *Boethius's* Consolations of Philosophy, which Chaucer translated, and from which he has frequently borrowed in his own original works.

By my head, Love is a greater law than may be
given for any earthly man; and therefore positive
law, and

such decree

Is broken all day for love, in each degree.
A man must needes love, maugre * his head;
He may not fly it, though he should be dead,
All be she maid or widow, or elles wife,

that calls it forth. And, also, it is not likely that
in all thy life thou shalt be able to stand in her
favour; no more shall I; thou knowest well that
thou and I be condemned to perpetual prison:—we
gain no ransom.

We strive as did the houndès for the bone:
They fought all day, and yet their part was none:
There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,
And bare away the bone betwixt them both:
And, therefore at the kingès court, my brother,
Each man for himself, there is none other.^x
Love if thee lust,^y for I love, and aye shall;
And soothly, levè brother, this is all.
Here in this prison musten we endure,
And every of us take his adventure."

Great was the strife, and long, betwixt these two,
if I had but leisure to describe it. But to the effect.
It happened on a day, a worthy Duke named Pe-
rithous, who had been companion to the Duke
Theseus from the day that they had been little
children, came to Athens to visit him,

And for to play as he was wont to do;
For in this world he lovèd no man so,

^y *In spite of.*

^x *None other rule.*

^y *Please or desire.*

And he lov'd him as tenderly again.
 So well they loved, as old bookes sain,*
 That when that one was dead, soothly to tell,
 His fellow went and sought him down in hell;
 But of that story list me not to write.

Duke Perithous loved Arcite well, and had known him at Thebes year by year; and finally, at his request and prayer, without any ransom, Theseus let Arcite out of prison, to go freely where he pleased. But this was the previous understanding between Theseus and Arcite; that if it so were that Arcite were ever in his life found, by day or night, one moment, in any country of Theseus, and he were caught, it was agreed that he should lose his head. There was no other remedy nor counsel. Arcite takes his leave, and speeds homeward. Let him beware; his neck lies in pledge.

How great a sorrow suffereth now Arcite!
The death he feeleth through his hearte smite;
 He weepeth, waileth, crieth piteously;
 To slay himself he waiteth privily.
 He said—"Alas, the day that I was born!
 Now is my prison worse than beforn;
 Now ~~is~~ me shape* eternally to dwell
 Not only in purgatory, but in hell.
 Alas! that ever I knew Perithous,
 For elles had I dwelt with Theseus
 Yfettered in his prison evermo';
 Then had I been in bliss and not in woe;
 Only the sight of her whom that I serve,
 Though that I never her gracè may deserve,
 Would have sufficèd right enough for me.
 O deare cousin Palamon, quoth he,

* Say.

* *That is to say*, Now is my life so shaped, or determined.

Thine is the victory of this adventure.
 Full blissful in prison may'st thou endure :
 In prison ?^b certes Nay, but in Paradise.
 Well hath Fortune yturned thee the dice,
 That hast the sight of her, and I th' absence ;
 For possible is since thou hast her presence,

and art an able and worthy knight, that by some chance, since Fortune is changeable, thou mayest attain, some time, to thy desire. But I that am exiled, and barren of all grace, and in such great despair that there is neither earth, water, fire, nor air, nor creature that is made from them, that may heal me or comfort me in this matter,—well ought I to perish in my despair

and distress ;

Farewell my life, my lust, and my gladness.

Alas, why do men complain so commonly

Of purveyance^c of God or of Fortune,
 That giveth them full oft in many a guise
 Well better than they can themselves devise ?

^b This is an example of the very convenient license afforded to the poet, by the varying, undetermined pronunciation of the fourteenth century. Prison in one line becomes prison in the next: though no doubt the accent in the latter case should be very slightly marked, and the second syllable be proportionately lengthened and made prominent. Mr. Cowden Clarke gives the second line thus—

“ In prison ? certes nay, but in Paradise.”

Now, if we get over the jump at the beginning of the line, and make, in effect, an elision of the *In*, what becomes of one of the two essentially emphatic members of the sentence, the *Nay*, and which so well prepares by the pause after it for the rapidity of the following words, and the emphatic rest on the last—

“ In prison ? certes Nay, but in Paradise ?”

^c Provision—ordination.

Some man desireth for to have richéss,
 That cause is of his murder, or great sicknéss;
 And some man would out of his prison fain ^d
 That in his house is of his menie ^e slain;
 Infinite harmes be in this mattére:
 We wot not what thing that we prayen here.
 We faren as he that drunk is as a mouse:
 A drunken man wot well he hath a house,
 But he ne wot which is the right way thider,
 And to a drunken man the way is slider;^f
 And certes in this world so faren we:
 We seeken fast after felicity,

but, truly, full often we go wrong. Thus may we all say; but especially I, who believed, and had a great opinion, that if I might escape from prison, then should I be in joy and perfect health, whereas I now am exiled from my happiness. Since I may not see you, Emily, I am but as one dead; there is no remedy."

Palamon, on the other side, when he knew that Arcite was gone, maketh such sorrow that the great tower resounded with his yelling and clamour. The very fetters on his shins were wet with his salt and bitter tears.

"Alas," quoth he, "Arcita, cousin mine,
 Of all our strifes, God wot, the fruit is thine.
 Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
 And of my woe thou givest little charge.

Thou mayest, since thou hast wisdom and manhood, assemble all the people of our kindred, and make so sharp a war on this country, that by some adventure or treaty

Thou mayst have her to lady and to wife,
 For whom that I must needes lose my life.

^d Gladly.

^e Attendants.

^f Slippery—treacherous.

For as by way of possibility
 Since thou art at thy large, and prison-free,
 And art a lord, great is thine advantage
 More than is mine, that starve^s here in a cage.
 For I may weep and wail, while that I live,
 With all the woe that prison may me give,
 And eke with pain that love me giveth also,
 That doubleth all my torment and my woe,²
 Therewith the fire of jealousy up start
 Within his breast, and hent³ him by the heart
 So woodly,⁴ that he like was to behold
 The box tree, or the ashes dead and cold.
 Then said he, "O cruel Goddess that govern
 This world, with binding of your word etern',
 And written in the table of adamant,
 Your parliament¹ and your eternal grant,
 What is mankind more unto you yhold
 Than is the sheep that rouseth⁵ in the fold?
 For slain is man right as another beast,
 And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest,
 And hath sicknès and great adversity,—
 And often times guiltèss, pardé.¹
 What governance is in this prescience
 That, guiltèss, tormenteth innocence,—

and that even increases all this my pain,—that
 man must be bound to observe, for God's sake, to
 check his own

will,

There as a beast may all his lust fulfil?
 And when a beast is dead, he hath no pain,
 But man after his death must weep and plain,
 Though in this world he havè care and woe:
 Withouten doubt, it maye standen so.

^s Perish.

^b Seized.

¹ Frenziedly.

^j Consultations.

^k Huddlèth.

¹ A corruption of the French oath pardeieux, or Par Dieu.

The answer of this lete^a I to divinès,
 But well I wot, that in this world great pine is.
 Alas ! I see a serpent or a thief,
 That many a truë man hath done mischief,
 Go at his large, and where him lust^a may turn.
 But I must be in prison through Satürn,
 And eke through Juno, jealous, and eke wood,^o
 That hath well nigh destroyed all the blood
 Of Thebes, with his wastè walles wide.
 And Venus slayeth me on that other side,
 For jealousy, and fear of him Arcite."

Now will I cease of Palamon a little, and leaving him still to dwell in his prison, will forthwith tell you of Arcite. The summer passeth, and the long nights increase doubly the strong pains both of the lover and the prisoner. I know not which hath the saddest condition ; for Palamon is condemned to perpetual prison, and to die in his chains and fetters ; and Arcite is exiled for evermore out of that country, on penalty of his head :

Ne never more he shall his lady see.

You lovers ask I now this question,
 Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon ?
 That one may see his lady day by day,
 But in prison must he dwellén alway.
 That other where him lust, may ride or go,
 But see his lady shall he never mo.

Now, ye that can, judge as you please.

When that Arcite had come to Thebes, full oft a day he swooned and said Alas ! for he shall never more see his lady. And shortly to conclude his woe,

So muchel sorrow had never creäture
 That is or shall be, while the world may 'dure.

^a Leave.

^a Please.

^o Mad.

His sleep, his meat, his drink is him beraft,
 That lean he wax'd, and dry as is a shaft.
 His eyen hollow, and grisly to behold ;
 His hue fallow,^p and pale as ashes cold ;
 And solitary he was, and ever alone,
 And wailing all the night, making his moan.
 And if he hearde song or instrument,
 Then would he weep, he mighte not be stent.^q
 So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
 And changèd so, that no man coulde know
 His speeche ne his voice, though men it heard.

And in his garb, he fared, for all the world, like
 ne possessed not only by the lover's malady of
 'reos,^r but by many maladies engendered of me-
 uncholy humours, before his head, in his fantastic
 ell. And, in short, both the habit and disposi-
 tion of this woeful lover, Dan Arcite, were
 urned upside down. Why should I all day re-
 ate his woe ?

When he had endured for a year or two this
 ruel torment, and this pain and woe at Thebes,
 n his own country, as I have said,—upon a night,
 s he lay in sleep,

Him thought how that the wingèd god, Mercúry,
 Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.
 His sleepy yard in hand he bare upright ;
 A hat he wear'd upon his hairès bright.

This god was arrayed (he observed) as he was
 when Argus took his sleep. He said to him thus,

“ To Athens shalt thou wend,
 There is thee shapen of thy woe an end.”

And with that word Arcite awoke and started.
 “ Now truly,” quoth he, “ how sore that ever I

^p Sallow—yellow.

^q Stopped.

^r Cupid.

It befell that in the seventh year, and on the third night of May, as old books relate, that to all this story more plainly,

Were it by adventure or destiny
(As when a thing is shapen it shall be),

Palamon, soon after the midnight, by the help
a friend, brake prison,

And fleeth the city fast as he may go.

For he had so given his gaoler to drink claret
made of a certain wine, with narcotics, and fine
opium of Thebes,

That all the night, though that men would him shal
The gaoler slept, he might not awake.
And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
The night was short, and faste^v by the day,

so that he must needs consider how to hide himself. And to a grove close beside there,

With dread-ful foot then stalketh Palamon.
For, shortly, this was his opinion,
That in that grove he would him hide all day,
And in the night then would he take his way
To Thebes ward,

to beg of his friends to help him to make way
upon Theseus. And shortly, either he would

lose his life
Or winnen Emily unto his wife.

This is the effect, and his full intent.

Now will I turn again to Arcite, who little
knew how nigh to him was his trouble, until that
Fortune had brought him into the snare.

^v Close—near.

But half so well beloved a man as he
 He was there never in court of his degree.
 He was so gentle of condition
 That throughout all the court was his renown.
 They saiden that it were a charity
 That Theseus would enhance his degree,
 And putten him in worshipful service,
 There as he might his virtues exercise.
 And thus within a while his name is sprung
 Both of his deedes, and of his good tongue,
 That Theseus hath taken him so near,
 That of his chamber he made him a squire,
 And gave him gold to maintain his degree.
 And eke men brought him out of his country
 From year to year, full privily his rent;
 But honestly and wily he it spent,
 That no man wondered how that he it had.
 And three year in this wise his life he lad;
 And bare him so in peace and eke in war,
 There n' as no man that Theseus hath dear;[†]

And in this bliss I will now leave Arcite, and
 speak a little of Palamon.

In darkness, and horrible and strong prison
 This seven year hath sitten Palamon
 Forpined,[‡] what for love, and for distress.
 Who feeleth double sorrow and heaviness
 But Palamon? that love distraineth so,

that out of his wit he goeth mad for sorrow. And
 also, he is a prisoner perpetually, and not merely
 for a year.

Who coulde rhyme in English properly
 His martyrdom? forsooth it am not I.
 Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.

[†] Holds dearer.

[‡] Wasted away.

It befell that in the seventh year, and on the third night of May, as old books relate, that tell all this story more plainly,

Were it by adventure or destiny
(As when a thing is shapen it shall be),

Palamon, soon after the midnight, by the help of a friend, brake prison,

And fleeth the city fast as he may go.

For he had so given his gaoler to drink claret, made of a certain wine, with narcotics, and fine opium of Thebes,

That all the night, though that men would him shake,
The gaoler slept, he mighte not awake.

And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.

The night was short, and faste^v by the day,

so that he must needs consider how to hide himself. And to a grove close beside there,

With dread-ful foot then stalketh Palamon.

For, shortly, this was his opinion,

That in that grove he would him hide all day,

And in the night then would he take his way

To Thebes ward,

to beg of his friends to help him to make war upon Theseus. And shortly, either he would

lose his life

Or winnen Emily unto his wife.

This is the effect, and his full intent.

Now will I turn again to Arcite, who little knew how nigh to him was his trouble, until that Fortune had brought him into the snare.

^v Close—near.

The busy lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluteth in her song the morrow grey :
 And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright,
 That all the Orient laugheth of the sight ;
 And with his streamèrs drieth in the greves *
 The silver droppes hanging on the leaves.

And Arcite, that is in the royal court of Theseus
 the principal squire,

Is risen, and looketh on the merry day,
 And for to do his observance to May,
 Rememb'ring on the point * of his desire,
 He on his courser, starting as the fire,
 Is ridden to the fieldes him to play,
 Out of the court, were it a mile or tway. †
 And to the grove of which that I you told,
 By adventure his way he gan to hold,
 To maken him a garland of the greves,
 Were it of woodbine or of hawthorn leaves,
 And loud he sang against the sunne sheen, ‡
 " O May, with all thy flow'res and thy green,
 Right welcome be thou, faire freshe May !
 I hope that I some green here gotten may."
 And from his courser, with a lusty * heart,
 Into the grove full hastily he start,
 And in a path he roamèd up and down,
 There, as by adventure, this Palamon
 Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
 For sore afearèd of his death was he.

Nothing knew he that it was Arcite ; God knows,
 he would full little have believed it. But truth to
 say, gone since

are many years,
 That field hath eyen, and the wood hath ears.
 It is full fair, a man to bear him even ;
 For all day meeten men at unset steven. †

* Groves. * Object. † Two. ‡ Bright or shining.
 * Mirthful, joyous. † At unappointed times.

hide. And when he had heard Arcite's tale, with a deadly pale countenance, as though he were mad, he started up out of the thick bushes, and said, "False Arcite! false wicked traitor! now art thou caught,

that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have all this pain and woe;
And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
As I full oft have told thee herebeforn;
And hast bejaped^b here duke Theseus;
And falsely changed hast thy namè thus;
I will be dead, or elles thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily;
But I will love her only, and no mo'.
For I am Palamon thy mortal foe.
And though that I no weapon have in this place,
But out of prison am astart by grace,^c
I drede nought that either thou shalt die,
Or thou ne shalt not loven Emily:
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not astart."

This Arcite then, with full dispiteous^d heart,
When he him knew, and had his talè heard,
As fierce as a lion pull'd out a sword,
And saide thus; "By God that sitteth above,
N' ere^e it that thou art sick, and wood^f for love,
And eke that thou no weapon hast in this place,
Thou shouldest never out of this grovè pace,

but,

shouldest dien of my hond;
For I defy the surety and the bond
Which that thou say'st that I have made to thee.
What! very fool, think well that love is free.

And I will love her, in spite of all thy power.

^b Deceived, tricked.

^c Started or escaped by grace or favour.

^d Unpitying—fierce.

^e Ne were—were it not.

^f Mad.

but for that thou art a worthy gentle knight, and
 sirest to contest her by battle, have here my
 oath, that to morrow I will not fail, without the
 knowledge of any other person, here to be found
 as a knight ;—

And bringen harness right enough for thee,
 And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
 And meat and drinke this night will I bring
 Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
 And if so be that thou my lady win,
 And slay me in this wood there I am in,
 Thou may'st well have thy lady as for me."
 This Palamon answer'd, "I grant it thee."

And thus have they parted until the morrow,
 when each of them hath laid his faith in pledge.

O Cupid, out of alle charity !

O regne* that wilt no fellow have with thee !

Truly is it said, that neither love nor lordship will,
 with their good will, have any fellowship :—

Well finden that Arcite and Palamon.

Arcite rode immediately into the town. And on
 the morrow, before daylight, he had prepared pri-
 vately two sets of armour, both fit and sufficient to
 contest the battle in the field between these two.
 And on his horse, as he rode alone, he carried all
 his armour before him.

And in the grove, at time and place yset,
 This Arcite and this Palamon be met.
 Then changen 'gan the colour of their face,
 Right as the hunter in the regne of Thrace,
 That standeth at a gappe with a spear,
 When hunted is the lion or the bear,

* King.

And heareth him come rushing in the greves,
 And breaking both the boughs and the leave
 And thinketh, Here cometh my mortal enemy
 Withouten fail, he must be dead or I;
 For either I must slay him at the gap,
 Or he must slay me, if that me mishap:
 So fareden they in changing of their hue,
 As far¹ as either of them other knew.

There was no "good-day," no saluting
 straight, without exchanging of words, each h
 to arm the

other

As friendly as he were his owen brother.

And after that, with strong and sharp spears
 thrust at each other for a wondrously long
 Thou mightest believe

that this Palamon

In his fighting were as a wood^j líón,
 And as a cruel tiger was Arcite.
 As wilde boars ^{gan} they together smite,
 That frothen white as foam for irè wood;^j
 Up to the ankle fought they in their blood.
 And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,
 And forth I will of Theseus you tell:—

The destiny, minister general,
 That executeth in the world o'er all
 The púrveyance^k that God hath seen beforne,
 So strong it is, that though the world had sw
 The contráry of a thing, by yea or nay,
 Yet sometime it shall fallen on a day
 That falleth not efté^l in a thousand year;
 For certainly our appetites here,

^b Groves.

ⁱ That is to say, when they distinguished each of
 "far" off "as either of them" could the "other" k^r
^j Wild, fierce. ^k Ordinance. ^l Again

Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
All this is ruled by the sight above.

This show I now by mighty Theseus, who is so
lesirous to hunt, and especially

the greate hart in May,
That in his bed there dawneth^m him no day
That he n' isⁿ clad, and ready for to ride
With hunt and horn, and houndès him beside.
For in his hunting hath he such delight,
That it is all his joy and appetite
To be himself the greate harte's bane ;
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.

Near was the day,

And Theseus with alle joy and bliss,
With his Hypolita, the faire queen,
And Emily yclothèd all in green,

ide royally in the hunt. And to the grove, that
tood close by, in which men told him there was
hart, Duke Theseus takes the straight way ; and
e rideth right to the laund,^o where

the hart ywont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his way.

The Duke will have a course or two at him with
hounds, such as he delights

to command.

And when this duke was comen to the laund,
Under the sun he lookèd, and anon
He was 'warè of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme,^p as it were bullès two.
The brighte swordès wenten to and fro
So hideously, that with the leaste stroke
It seemèd that it woulde fell an oak.

^m On or for—him.

^o An unploughed plain.

ⁿ Ne is—is not.

^p Furiously.

And eke deliver himself out of prisón.
 And eke his hearte had compassion
 Of women, for they wepten ever in one.*
 And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
 And soft unto himself he sayèd, "Fie
 Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
 But be a lion both in word and deed
 To them that be in répentance and drede,
 As well as to a proud dispiteous man
 That will maintainen that he first began.
 That lord hath little of discretion
 That in such case can^b no division,
 But weigheth pride and humbles after one."
 And shortly, when his ire is thus agone
 He gan to looken up with eyen light;

and to speak on high these words—

"The God of Love, ah, *benedicite*!
 How mighty and how great a lord is he?
 Against his might, there gainen^c none obstacles;
 He may be clep'd^d a god for his miracles,
 For he can maken at his owen guise
 Of every heart, as that him list devise.

Lo, here this Palamon and Arcite, that were quite
 out of prison, and might have lived royally in
 Thebes, that know I am their mortal enemy, and
 that their death also lies in my power; and yet
 hath love in spite

of their eyen two
 Ybrought them hither, bothe for to die.
 Now looken, is not this a high folly?
 Who maye be a fool, but if he love?
 Behold, for Goddes sake, that sittest above,

* That is to say, ever in one unbroken grief; or, in plain
 prose, continually.

^b Can make, or knows.

^c Prevail.

^d Called.

See how they bleed! be they not well array'd?
 Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
 Their wages, and their fees for their servise:
 And yet they weenen* for to be full wise,
 That serven love, for aught that may befall.
 And yet is this the beste game of all,
 That she, for whom they have this jollity
 Con them therefore as muchel thank as me;†
 She wot no more of all this hote fare
 By God, than wot a cuckoo or a hare.
 But all must be assayed, hot or cold,
 A man must be a fool either young or old.

know it by myself full long ago; for in my time
 was a servant. And therefore since I know of
 love's pain, and know how sorely it can take pos-
 session of a man,—as he that hath been often caught
 in his snare,—I forgive you entirely this trespass,
 at the request

of the queen that kneeleth here,
 And eke of Emily, my sister dear.

And ye shall both immediately swear unto me that
 ye shall never more make war upon my dear coun-
 try or upon me, by night nor day, but be my
 friends in all that ye can. I forgive you this tres-
 pass every bit." And they swore, as he asked, fair
 and well; and prayed him for mercy and lord-
 ship; and he granted them grace; and then
 said:—

"To speak of real lineage and richéss,
 Though that she were a queen or a princess,
 Each of you both is worthy, doubtèless
 To wedden when time is; but, nathèless

• Believe.

† Or, in other words, knows no more reason for thanking
 them than I do.

I speak as for my sister Emily,
 For whom ye have this strife and jealousy.
 Ye wot yourself, she may not wedden two
 At onès, though ye fighten evermo' ;
 But one of you, all be him loth or lief,^f
 He must go pipen in an ivy leaf.
 This is to say, she may not have you both
 All be ye never so jealous, ne so wroth.

And therefore I put you in this state that each of you shall have his destiny, as it is determined for him. Harken in what manner. Lo, here is the end for you of which I shall devise. My will is this ; for plain conclusion, and without any replications ;—if that you like it, take it for the best :—That each of you shall go where he pleases, freely, without ransom or danger ; and that this day fifty weeks, neither further nor nearer, each of you shall bring a hundred knights, armed fully for the lists, all ready to contest her by battle. And this I promise you without fail, upon my truth, and as I am a knight, whichever of you both hath the power, that is to say, that whether he or thou, may with his hundred, slay his opponent, or drive him out of the lists—

Him shall I given Emily to wife
 To whom that fortune giveth so fair a grace.
 The listès shall I maken in this place.
 And God so wisely on my soule rue
 As I shall even s judgè be, and true.

Ye shall make no other end with me, but that one of you shall be dead or taken. And if you think this is well said, speak your minds, and hold yourselves satisfied,^h

^f Glad.

^s Impartial.

^h “ And if you thinketh this is well ysaid,
 Saith your avis, and holdeth you apaid.”

"This is your end, and your conclusion."

Who looketh lightly now, but Palamon?
 Who springeth up for joye, but Arcite?
 Who could it tell, or who could it indite,
 The joye that is makèd in the place
 When Theseus hath done so fair a grace?
 But down on knees went every manner wight,
 And thankèd him with all their heartès might;

and especially these Thebans often times. And thus with good hopes and blithe hearts they take their leave, and begin to ride homeward to Thebes, with its wide and old walls.

I trow men would deem it negligent if I forgot to tell the expenditure of Theseus, who goes busily to form the lists in a royal manner, that I dare well say that such a noble theatre there was not in all the world beside. The circuit was a mile about, with stone walls, and a ditch beyond. It was round in shape, and the seats were arranged like the degrees of a compass, radiating from the centre, and raised gradually to the height of sixty paces, so that when a man was placed on one stage he hindered not his fellow from seeing.¹ Eastward there stood a gate of white marble, and opposite, on the west, just such another.

And shortly to concluden, such a place
 Was never in earthe in so little a space;

there were no craftsmen in the land, skilled in geometry or architecture, no painter nor carver of

¹ "Round was the shape, in manner of a compass,
 Full of degrees, the height of sixty paces,
 That when a man was set on one degree,
 He letted *not his fellow* for to see."

CANTERBURY TALES.

ges that Theseus did not give him meat and
ges to devise and make the theatre.

And for to do his rite and sacrifice,
He eastward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddess of love,
Done make an altar and an oratory.
And westward—in the mind and in memory
Of Mars—he makèd hath right such another
That coste largely of gold a fother.^k

And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white, and red corál,
An oratory riche for to see
In worship of Dián of chastity,

hath Theseus wrought in a noble manner. Noi
must I forget to describe

The noble carving and the portraitures,
The shape, the countenance of the figures
That weren in these oratories three.

First in the temple of Venus may'st thou see,
Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
The broken sleepès, and the sikes^l cold,
The sacred tearès, and the waimentings,^m
The fiery strokès of the désirings,
That Lovè's servants in this life endure ;
The oathès that their covenants assuren ;
Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
Beauty and Youth, Baudry and Richéss,
Charmès and Force, Lesingsⁿ and Flattery,
Dispencè, Business, and Jealousy,—
That wear'd of yellow goldès^o a garlánd,
And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand ;

^k A cart load, hence any indefinite great quanti

^l Sighings. ^m Lamentings. ⁿ I

^o The yellow goldès are the yellow flowers of th
sol.

Feastès, instrúments, and caroles and dances,
 Lust, and array, and all the circumstánces
 Of Love, which that I reckon, and reckon shall,
 By order weren painted on the wall,
 And more than I can make of mentión :
 For soothly all the Mount of Citheron,
 There^p Venus hath her principal dwelling,
 Was showèd on the wall in portraying,
 With all the garden, and the lustiness.^q
 Nought was forgotten :—the porter Idleness ;
 Ne Nárcissus the fair, of yore agone ;
 Ne yet the folly of King Solomon ;
 Ne yet the greате strength of Hercules ;
 Th' enchantment of Medea and Circés ;
 Ne of Turnús, the hardy fierce couráge ;
 Ne riche Cræsus caitiff^r in serváge.
 Thus may ye see that wisdom ne richéss,
 Beauty ne sleighte,^s strength ne hardiness,
 Ne may with Venus holden champarty,^t
 For as her list, the worlde may she gie.^u

o, all these folk were so caught in her snare,—

Till they for woe, full often said alas !

uffice here these one or two examples ; and yet I
 ould reckon a thousand more.

The statue of Venus, glorious for to see,
 Was naked, floating in the large sea,
 And from the navel down all coverèd was
 With waves green, and bright as any glass.
 A citole^v in her right hand hadde she ;
 And on her head full seemly for to see,

^p Where.

^q Delight.

^r Wretched.

^s Skill.

^t Share of power.

^u Guide.

^v A musical instrument, probably of the dulcimer kind.
 ower mentions it among the instruments “ which sounded
 w.”

A rosè garland fresh, and well smelling ;
 Above her head her doves flickering.
 Before her stood her sone Cupido,
 Upon his shoulders wingès had he two,
 And blind he was, at it is often seen ;
 A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.

Why should I not as well eke tell you all
 The portraiture that was upon the wall,
 Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red ?
 All painted was the wall in length and brede,^w
 Like to the estres^x of the grisly place
 That highte the great temple of Mars in Thrace
 In thilke colde and frosty region
 There as Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
 First on the wall was painted a forést,
 In which there wonneth^y neither man nor beast
 With knotty, gnarry, barren trees old,
 Of stubbès sharp and hideous to behold ;
 In which there ran a rumble and a swough,^z
 As though a storm should bursten every bough ;
 And downward from a hill under a bent^a
 There stood the temple of Mars Armipotent,
 Wrought all of burnish'd steel ; of which th' ent^b
 Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see ;
 And thereout came a rage and such a vise^b
 That it made all the gatès for to rise.
 The northern light in at the doore shone,
 For window on the wall ne was there none,
 Through which men mighten any light discern.
 The door was all of adamant etern',
 Yclenchèd overthwart and endèlong,^c
 With iron tough ; and for to make it strong,

^w Breadth. ^x Interior. ^y Dwelleth.

^z This is no doubt the "sough" of Burns, and of northern poetical writers ; but how much finer is the form of the word ?

^a Bend or slope of the soil. ^b Rush.

^c Crosswise and lengthwise.

Every pillar the temple to sustene
Was tonne great, of iron bright and sheen.

There saw I first the dark imagining
Of Felony,—and all the compassing ;
The cruel irè,^d red as any glede ;^e
The pick-purse, and eke the palè drede ;^f
The smiler with the knife under the cloak ;
The shepen^g burning, with the blacke smoke ;
The treason of the murdering in the bed ;
The open war, with woundes all be-bled ;
Conteke^h with bloody knife, and sharp menace :
All full of chirking was that sorry place.
The slayer of himself yet saw I there,
His heartè's blood hath bathèd all his hair ;
The nail ydriven in the shode on height ;
The colde death, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple sate Mischance,
With discomfort and sorry countenance.
Yet saw I Woodnessⁱ laughing in his rage ;
Armèd Complaint ; Outhees ;^j and fierce Outrage ;
The carrion in the bush, with throat ycarven ;
A thousand slain, and not of qualm ystarven ;^k
The tyrant, with the prey by force yrest ;
The town destroyèd—there was nothing left.
Yet saw I burnt the shippes hoppesteres ;^l
The hunt^m ystrangled with the wilde bears ;
The sow frettingⁿ the child right in the cradle ;
The cook yscallèd for all his long ladle :

^d Vengeance.

^e Burning coal.

^f Dread or fear.

^g Stable.

^h Contest.

ⁱ Madness.

^j Outcry.

^k That is to say, and not *ystarven*—destroyed, through *ialm*—sickness, or disease.

^l Hoppesteres, probably from the Saxon words, *hoppe*—*aves*, and *ster*—danced. The meaning, therefore, would be that the ship was burnt, even as she danced upon the *aves*—a most striking, poetical, and picturesque image.

^m Hunter.

ⁿ Devouring.

Nought was forgot by th' infortunè of Marte,^a
 The carter overridden with his carte;
 Under the wheel full low he lay adown.

There were also of Marte's division
 Th' armourer, and the bowyer, and the smith,
 That forgeth sharpe swordès on his stith;^o
 And all above depainted in a tower,
 Saw I Conquést, sitting in great honour,
 With thilke sharpe sword over his head,
 Yhanging by a subtle twined thread.
 Depainted was the slaughter of Julius,
 Of great Neró, and of Antonius:
 All be that thilke time they were unborn,
 Yet was their death depainted there befor
 By menacing of Mars, right by figúre;
 So was it shewèd in that portraiture
 As is depainted in the circles above,
 Who shall be slain, or elles dead for love.
 Sufficeth one example in stories old;
 I may not reckon them alle, though I wold.

The statue of Mars upon a carte^p stood
 Armèd, and lookèd grim as he were wood;^q
 And over his head there shinen two figúres
 Of starres, that be clepèd in Scriptúres
 That one Puella, that other Rubeus.
 This god of Armes was arrayèd thus:
 A wolf there stood before him at his feet
 With eyen red, and of a man he eat.
 With subtle pencil painted was this story
 In rédoubting^r of Mars, and of his glory.

Now to the temple of Dián the chaste
 As shortly as I can I will me haste,
 To tellen you of the descriptioun
 Depainted by the walles up and down

^a Of the misfortunes produced by Mars. Marte is th
Italian form of the word.

^o Stithy—anvil.

^p Car, or carriage.

^q Mad.

^r Reverencing.

Of hunting, and of shame-faced chastity.
 There saw I how woeful Calistope,
 When that Dián aggrieved was with her,
 Was turnèd from a woman to a bear,
 And after was she made the lodèstar;
 There was it painted, I can say no far':
 Her son is eke a star as men may see.
 There saw I Daphne turnèd to a tree.

There saw I Acteon a hart ymakèd,
 For vengeance that he saw Dián all naked:
 I saw how that his houndès have him caught
 And fretten^t him, for that they knew him nought.
 Yet painted was a little furthermore
 How Atalanta hunted the wilde boar,
 And Meleager, and many another mo',
 For which Diana wrought them care and woe.
 There saw I many another wondrous story,
 The which me list not drawen to memòry.

This goddess on a hart full highe seat,
 With smalle houndès all about her feet;
 And underneath her feet she had a moon,
 Waxing it was, and shoulde wanen soon.
 In gaudy green her statue clothèd was,
 With bow in hand, and arrows in a case.
 Her eyen caste she full low adown,
 There^u Pluto hath his darke regioun.

Well could the painter life-ly,^v that it wrought:
 With many a florin he the huès bought.

Now are the lists made; and Theseus, who, at his
 great cost, arrayed thus the temples and the
 heatres in every part—when it was done, liked
 he whole wondrously well. But I will cease a
 litle of Theseus, and speak of Palamon and Arcite.

The day approacheth for their return, when each

^s Farther.

^u There, where.

^t Devoured.

^v Life-like.

man should bring a hundred knights to contest the battle, as I told you; and to Athens, to hold their covenant, each hath brought a hundred knights, well armed at all points, for the war. And, certainly, many a man believed that never since the world began (to speak of the knighthood that was upon each side),

As far as God hath makèd sea and land,
was there

of so few so noble a company.

For every wight that loved chivalry, and would
with his goodwill have an excelling

name,
Hath prayèd that he might be of that game,
And well was him that thereto chosen was.

And if such a case happened to-morrow, ye know
well that every lusty knight that loveth *par amour*,
and hath his strength, would with his goodwill de-
termine to be there, were it in England or anywhere
else,

To fight for a lady, ah! *Benedicite*;
It were a lusty [^] sighte for to see;
And right so fareden they with Palamon.

With him there went many a knight. Some will
be armed in a habergeon,* and in a breastplate,
and in a gipon;† and some will have a pair of
large plates. Some will have a Prussian shield
or a target; and some will be well armed about
the legs and have an axe; and some a mace of
steel. There is no new fashion but that has been

[^] *Pleasant*, cheering. * A small coat of mail.
† A short cassock.

old. They were armed, as I have said to you,
every one after his opinion.

There mayst thou see, coming with Palamon,
Licurge himself, the greates king of Thrace ;
Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eyen in his head,
They glowèden betwixen yellow and red,
And like a griffon looked he about ;
With combèd hairès on his browès stout ;
His limbès great, his brawnès hard and strong ;
His shoulders broad, his armès round and long.
And as the guise was in his country,
Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
With foure whitè bullès in the trace.
Instead of coat-armour on his harnès,—
With nailès yellow, and bright as any gold,
He had a beare's skin, coal-black for old.^a
His longe hair was comb'd behind his back ;
As any raven's feather, it shone for black.
A wreath of gold, arm-great, of hugè weight,
Upon his head, sate full of stonès bright,
Of finè rubies and of diamonds.
About his car there wenten white alauns,^a
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,^b
To huntèn at the lion or the deer,
And followed him, with muzzle fast ybound,
Collared with gold, and tourettes^c filèd round.
A hundred lordès had he in his rout^d
Armèd full well, with heartès stern and stout.
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius, the king of Inde,
Upon a steede bay,^e trapped in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred^f wele,

^a For old, through age.

^a A species of Spanish mastiff much esteemed in Italy in Chaucer's time.

^b Ox.

^c Rings for the leash.

^d Company.

^e Or, to transpose the words, a bay steed.

^f Diversified with flourishes.—Tyrrwhitt.

Came riding like the god of Armès, Mars ;
 His coat-armour was of a cloth of Tars,
 Couchèd^s with pearls white and round and great ;
 His saddle was of burnt^h gold new ybeat.

A short mantle hung upon his shoulders,—

Bretful of rubies red—as fire sparklîng ;
 His crispe hair like ringès was yrun,
 And that was yellow, and glitterfd as the sun.
 His nose was high, his eyen bright citrine,¹
 His lippès round, his colour was sanguîne ;
 A few fracknes^j in his face ysprent
 Betwixen yellow and black,”

somewhat mingled ;—

And as a lion he his looking cast.

Of five and twenty years I reckon his age,—

His beard was well begunnen for to spring,
 His voice was as a trumpet thundering ;
 Upon his head he weared of laurel green,
 A garland fresh,

and pleasant for to see. Upon his hand he bare
 for his amusement,—

An eagle tame, as any lily white.
 A hundred lordès had he with him there,
 All armèd, save their heads, in all their gear,
 Full richely in alle manner thingès ;
 For trusteth well, that earlès, dukès, kingès,
 Were gathered in this noble company,
 For love and for increase of chivalry.
 About this king there ran on every part,
 Full many a tame líon and leópart.

And in this wise, these lords, one and all, have
 come to the city on Sunday, about prime, and
alighted in the town. This Theseus, this duke,

^s Laid, or trimmed.

¹ Of a bright citron colour.

^h Burnished.

^j Freckles.

this worthy knight, when he had brought them into his city, and lodged them each according to his degree, feasteth them; and takes such pains to please and to do honour to them, that men even believed that no man's wit or condition might amend it. But as to the minstrelsy, the service at the feast, the great gifts to high and low, the rich array of the palace,—or as to who sate first or last upon the dais, what ladies were fairest, or danced best, or which of them could best carol and sing, or

Who most feelingly speakéth of love;
What hawkès sitting on the perch above,
What houndès ligger^k on the floor adown;

of all this, I will make no mention now, but proceed to the effect of my story: that appears to me the best. Now comes the point; and, if it so please you, hearken:—

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
When Palamon the larke hearde sing,
Although it were not day by hours two,
Yet sung the lark,—

and Palamon, at once, with holy heart, and with a high desire, rose to go on his pilgrimage to the benign and blissful Citherea, I mean Venus, honourable and worthy. And in her bower he walketh forth a few paces unto the lists, where her temple was, and down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer and sore heart he said,—

^k Our northern readers, especially those about Leeds, will not need to be told that ligger means lying; though no doubt many a Leeds man would be interested in hearing that lying means ligger; so commonly is the latter word in use among the humbler classes there.

“Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venús,
 Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
 Thou gladder of the Mount of Citheron!
 For thilke love thou haddest to Adon’,¹
 Have pity on my bitter tearès smart,
 And take mine humble prayer at thine heart.

Alas! I ne have no language to tell
 The effecte nor the torment of mine hell;
 Mine hearte may mine harmès not bewray;^m
 I am so confuse that I cannot say:
 But mercy, lady bright! that knowest wele
 My thoughts, and seest what harmès that I feel.

Consider all this, and have pity on my pain, as
 wisely as I shall for evermore with all my might
 be thy true servant: . . . that I swear, if ye will
 but now help me. I care not to boast of arms.

Nor ask I not to-morrow to have victóry,
 Nor rénown in this case, nor vaine glory
 Of prize of armès, blowen up and down;
 But I would have fully possession
 Of Emily, and die in her service;
 Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.

I care not which may be the best, to have the vic-
 tory over them, or they over me, so that I may
 but have my lady in mine arms. And for though
 Mars is the god of war, your influence is so great
 in heaven, that if you please I shall certainly
 have my love.

Thy temple will I worship evermo’,
 And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
 I will do sacrifice, and fires beat,ⁿ
 And if ye will not so, my lady sweet!
 Then pray I you, to-morrow with a spear
 That Arcita me through the hearte bear:

¹ *Adonis.*

^m *Discover.*

ⁿ *Prepare, make.*



Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
 Though that Arcita win her to his wife :
 This is the effect and end of my prayére,
 Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear."

When Palamon had done his orison, he did sacrifice, and that at once most piteously, with all due circumstances, though I do not at present describe them. And at the last the statue of Venus shook, and made a sign ; whereby he understood that his prayer was that day accepted. For though the sign showed a delay, yet he knew well that his boon was granted,

And with glad heart he went him home full soon.

The third hour unequal^o that Palamon began to go to the temple of Venus,

° "In the astrological system, the day, from sunrise to sunset, and the night, from sunset to sunrise, being each divided into twelve hours, it is plain that the hours of the day and night were never equal, except just at the equinoxes. The hours attributed to the planet were of this unequal sort." Taking the seven planets in the following order of rotation, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, "the first hour of the Sunday, reckoning from sunrise, belonged to the Sun, the planet of the day, the second to Venus, the third to Mercury, &c.; and, continuing this method of allotment, we shall find that the twenty-second hour also belonged to the Sun, and the twenty-third to Venus; so that the hour of Venus really was, as Chaucer says, two hours before sunrise of the following day. Accordingly, we are told that the third hour after Palemon set out for the temple of Venus the sun rose, and Emilie began to go to the temple of Diane. It is not said that this was the hour of Diane or the Moon, but it really was; for, as we have just seen, the twenty-third hour of Sunday belonging to Venus, the twenty-fourth must be given to Mercury, and the first hour of Monday falls in course to the Moon, the presiding planet of that day. After this Arcite is described as walking to the temple of Mars [p. 60] in the next hour of Mars, that is, the fourth hour of the day."—Tyrwhitt.

Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
 And to the temple of Dián 'gan hie.
 Her maidens that she thither with her lad,
 Full readily ^p with them the fire they had,
 Th' incense, the clothes, and the remenant all,
 That to the sacrificè 'longen shall,
 The hornès full of mead, as was the guise;
 There lackèd nought to do her sacrifice.
 Smoking the temple, full of clothès ^q fair,—
 This Emily with hearte debonair,
 Her body wash'd with water of a well.

but how she did her rite I dare not say, except
 the generals:

Her bright hair combèd was, untressèd all;
 A coroun of a green oak, cerial,^r
 Upon her head was set, full fair and meet.

'Two fires she began then to prepare on the altar,
 and to perform other rites as men may see in the
 writings of Statius of Thebes, and in other old
 books. When the fire was kindled, with piteous
 cheer, she spake thus unto Diana:—

“O chaste goddess of the woodès green,
 To whom both heaven, and earth, and sea is seen;
 Queen of the regne ^s of Pluto, dark and low,
 Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know
 Full many a year, and wott'st what I desire,—

^p Ready—prepared.

^q Hangings.

^r This appears to refer to the species called *cerres*—the
 'turkey Oak—one of the most graceful of all the known
 kinds, and which is very common all over the south-east of
 Europe. It may be observed that “the sacrificers were accus-
 tomed to wear a garland of the leaves of the plant that was
 dedicated to the divinity to whom the sacrifices were offered.”
 The oak was dedicated to Diana, so Emily wears “the green
 oak, cerial.”

^s Realm.

^t Known.

keep me from thy vengeance and thy rage, that Acteon suffered from so cruelly. Chaste goddess, thou well knowest that I desire to remain a maiden all my life,

Ne never will I be no love ne wife.

I am, thou knowest, a maiden of thy company, and love hunting, and walking in the wild woods, and not to become a wife or a mother.

Nought will I knowen company of man.
Now help me, lady, since ye may and can.
For those three formès that thou hast in thee,
And Palamon that hath such love to me,
And eke Arcite that loveth me so sore,
This grace I praye thee withouten more,

that you will

sende love and peace betwixt them two ;
And from me turn away their heartès so,
That all their hote love and their desire,
And all their busy torment and their fire,
Be quench'd or turnèd in another place.
And if so be thou wilt not do me grace,
Or if my destiny be shapen so
That I shall needès have one of them two,

then,

Send me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddesse of clean chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheekès fall,
Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,
My maidenhood thou keep, and well conserve,
And while I live a maid I will thee serve."

The fire burnt clear upon the altar whilst Emily thus prayed, but suddenly she saw a strange sight. One of the fires was instantly quenched, then

lighted again; and immediately after the other fire was also quenched, and was

—— all agone.

And as it quenched it made a whistling, as these wet brands do when they burn. And at the end of the brands

outran anon,

As it were, bloody droppès many [a] one,
For which so sore aghast was Emily,
That she was well nigh mad, and 'gan to cry :
For she ne wiste what it signified.
But only for the feare thus she cried,
And wept, that it was pity for to hear.

And therewithal Diana 'gan appear
With bow in hand, right as a huntèress,
And saide—" Daughter, stint thine heaviness.
Among the goddes high it is affirmed,
And by etern' word written and confirmed,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho"
That have for thee so muchel care and woe ;
But unto which of them I may not tell.
Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell.

The fires that burn on my altar have declared unto thee the issue of thy adventure of love." And with that word the arrows in the quiver of the goddess clattered fast and rang as she went forth and vanished. For which Emily was much astonished, and said, "What amounteth this, alas? I put myself in thy protection, Diana, and in thy disposition;" and then she goeth home by the nearest way.

The next hour of Mars that followed this,* Ar-cite walked forth to the temple of the fierce God

* *Those.*

* See note in page 56.

to do his sacrifice with all the rites of his pagan manner.

With piteous heart and high devotion,
 Right thus to Mars he said his orison :
 " O stronge God, that in the regnès^w cold
 Of Thracè honoured art, and lord yhold,
 And hast in every regne, and every land
 Of armès all the bridle in thine hand,
 And them fortunest as thee list devise,
 Accept of me my piteous sacrifice !
 If so be that my youthe may deserve,
 And that my might be worthy for to serve
 Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
 Then pray I thee to rue upon my pine.

By the sorrow that was in thine own heart when thy love for Venus was discovered by Vulcan, have pity also on my grief. I am, as thou knowest, young and ignorant, and, as I believe, with love hurt more than ever was any other living creature. For she that makes me endure all this woe reckes not whether I sink or float. And well I know, before she will show me mercy, I must with strength win her in the place. And well I know, without help or grace from thee, my strength will avail nothing.

Then help me, Lord, to-morrow in my battle, for the sake of the fire that once burned in thine own breast, as well as for the fire that now burneth me. So act, that I, to-morrow,

may have victóry ;

Mine be the travail, and thine be the glory.

Thy sovereign temple I will most honour of any

^w Realmès.



place, and always labour most in thy strong craft, and to please thee. And in thy temple I will hang my banner, and all the arms of my company; and evermore, until that day I die, I will find eternal fire to burn before thee. And I will also bind myself to this vow. My beard, my hair, that hangeth low down, that never yet felt the touch of razor or of shears, I will give to thee, and be thy true servant while I live.

Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore;
Give me the victory, I ask no more."

As Arcite the strong ceased his prayer, the rings that hung on the temple-door, and also the doors, clattered full fast, and Arcite was somewhat alarmed. The fires burnt so brightly upon the altar,

That it 'gan all the temple for to light;
a sweet smell was given forth by the ground; and Arcite immediately raising his hand, cast more incense into the fire, and performed further rites; and, at last,

The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring;
And with that sound he heard a murmuring
Full low and dim, that saide thus—"Victory;"
For which he gave to Mars honour and glory.

And thus with joy and hope to fare well, Arcite soon returned to his lodging, as glad as bird
is of the brighte sun.

And anon there began such strife in heaven for the granting of these signs, between Venus, the goddess of love, and Mars, the stern god armipotent, that Jupiter was busily employed to stop it; until

the palè Saturnus the cold,
That knew so many² of adventures old,
Found in his old experience and art

the means to please all parties. As it is truly said, age hath great advantage; in age is both wisdom and custom; men may the old outrun but not out-rede.⁷ Saturn anon, to cause strife and dread to cease (although it is against his nature), began to find a remedy. "My dear daughter Venus," quoth Saturn, "my career, that hath so wide a scope, is more powerful than any man knoweth of.

Mine is the drenching in the sea so wan;
Mine is the prison in the darke cote;
Mine is the strangle, and hanging by the throat,
The murmur, and the churles rébelling,
The groining,² and the privy empoisonin
I do vengeance, and plain correction
While I dwell in the sign of the lion.
Mine is the ruin of the highe halls,
The falling of the towers, and of the walls,
Upon the miner or the carpenter.
I slew Sampson in shaking the pillar.
Mine be also the maladies cold,
The darke treasons, and the castès² old.
My looking is the father of pestilence.

Now weep no more. I shall take diligent care that Palamon, who is thine own knight, shall have his lady, as thou hast promised him. Nevertheless, Mars, too, shall help his knight. Betwixt you two there must be sometimes peace:

All be ye not of one complexion
That causeth all day such division.

² So much.

² Discontent.

⁷ Outstrip in council or wisdom.

² Contrivances—plots.

I am thine ayel,^b ready at thy will ;
Weep now no more, I shall thy lust^c fulfil."

Now will I cease of the gods above, Mars and Venus, and tell you plainly as I can of the effect for which I commenced.

Great was the feast in Athens on the day of the combat. And also the lusty season of that May made every one to be in such pleasure,

That all that Monday jousten they, and dance,
And spenden it in Venus' high servíce.

But because that they should rise early on the morrow to see the fight, they went at night to rest :

And on the morrow when the day 'gan spring,—
Of horse and harness, noise and clattering
There was in the hostélries all about.
And to the palace rode there many a rout
Of lordès, upon steedès and palfréys.
There mayst thou see devising of harnéss^d
So uncouth^e and so rich, and wrought so well
Of goldsmithry, of brouding,^f and of steel ;
The shieldès bright, testerès,^g and trappúres,^h
Gold-hewen helmets, hauberks, coat-armóurs ;
Lordès in paramount on their coursérs,
Knights of retinue, and eke squiérs,
Nailing the spears, and helmèts buckèling,
Gnidingⁱ of shieldès, with lainérs^j lacíng ;
There, as need is, they weren nothing idle.
The foamy steedès on the golden bridle

^b Grandfather. ^c Pleasure, desire. ^d Armour.

^e Uncommon—fanciful—elegant ; in short, as nearly as possible the very opposite of the things intimated by the same word at present.

^f Embroidery.

^g Head-pieces.

^h *Trappings* of the horses.

ⁱ Rubbing, polishing.

^j Straps, or thongs.

Gnawing ; and fast the armourers also,
 With file and hammer, pricking to and fro ;
 Yeomen on foot, and commons many [a] one,
 With shorte stavès, thick as they may gone ;
 Pipes, trumpès, nakeres,^k and clariouns
 That in the battle blowen bloody souns ;
 The palace full of people up and down,
 Here three, there ten, holding their questioin,
 Divining^l of these Theban knightès two :
 Some saiden thus, some said it shall be so ;
 Some helden with him with the blacke beard,
 Some with the ballèd,^m some with the thick-haired ;
 Some said he lookèd grim, and woulde fight ;
 He hath a sparthⁿ of twenty pounds of weight.

Thus was the hall full of divining long after the
 m began to rise. The great Theseus, who from
 eep is waked with minstrelsy and noise of music,
 eeps yet the chamber of his rich palace until the
 heban knights were both alike brought in honour
 to the palace.

The duke is seated at a window, arrayed as
 ough he were an enthroned god. The people
 ress forward quickly to see him, and to do high
 everence to him, and also to hearken to his com-
 and and his decision.

A herald on a scaffold cried "Ho !" till that the
 ise of the people was done ; and when he saw all
 ere silent, he thus showeth the mighty duke's
 ill :—

"The lord, of his high prudence, hath considered
 at it were destruction to gentle blood to fight in
 his undertaking after the manner of mortal battle.
 n order, therefore, to prevent death, he will

^k A kind of brazen drum.

^l *Guessing, conjecturing.*

^m Bald.

ⁿ *Axe, or halbert.*

With mighty maces the bonès they to-brest.
 He through the thickest of the throng 'gan threst.,
 There stumblen steedès strong, and down gó'th all;
 He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
 He foineth^t on his foe with a truncheon,
 And he him hurtleth with his horse adown.
 He through the body is hurt, and since ytake
 Maugre^u his head, and brought unto the stake;
 As foreword was, right there he must abide.
 Another led is on that other side.

And sometimes Theseus causes them to rest, to
 refresh themselves, and to drink if they please.
 Often, during the day, have these two Thebans
 met together, and wrought each other woe: each
 of them hath unhorsed the other.

There was no tiger in the vale of Golaphay,
 When that her whelp is stole when it is lite,^v
 So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite,
 For jealous heart, upon this Palamon;
 Ne in Belmarie there n' is so fell líón
 That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,^w
 Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
 As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite:
 The jealous strokès on their helmets bite;
 Outrunneth blood on both their sidès rede.^x
 Some time an end there is of every deed:

And ere the sun went to rest, the strong King
 Emetrius began to attack Palamon as he was
 fighting with Arcite,

And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite.

And by the force of twenty is he taken, unyielding,
 and drawn towards the stake; and in the rescue of
 Palamon, the strong King Lycurgus is borne down;

^a Thrust.

^t Pusheth, lasheth.

^u In spite of.

^v Little.

^w Mad.

^x Red.

and King Emetrius, for all his strength, is forced out of his saddle a sword's length, Palamon so struck him before he was taken. But all for nothing: he was brought to the stake.

His hardy heart might him helpen nought.
He must abiden, when that he was caught,
By force, and eke by composition.
Who sorroweth now, but woful Palamon,
That muste no more go again to fight?

And when Theseus saw this, he cried aloud to the people who were thus fighting, every one of them,

“Ho! no more, for it is done!
I will be true judge, and not party.
Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily,
That by his fortune hath her fair ywon.”

Immediately there began such a noise of people,

For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
It seemèd that the listès shoulde fall.
What can now faire Venus do above?
What saith she now? what doth this queen of love?
But weepeth so, for wanting of her will,
Till that her tearès in the listès fill.
She said, “I am ashamed doubtèless.”
Saturnus saide, “Daughter, hold thy peace:
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon,
And by mine head, thou shalt be eased soon.”

The trumpeters, with the loud minstrelsy—the heralds that so loudly cry and yell—are in all their joy for the success of Dan Arcite. But hearken to me: the noise is stopped a little; a miracle there befell anon. This fierce Arcite hath taken off his helmet,

And on a courser for to show his face,
 He pricketh endèlong the largè place,
 Looking upward upon this Emily;
 And she against him cast a friendly eye
 (For women, as to speaken in commúne,
 They follow all the favour of Fortúne).
 And was all his in cheer, as his in heart.
 Out of the ground a Fury infernal start,
 From Pluto sent, at réquest of Satúrn,
 For which his horse for feare 'gan to turn,
 And leap'd aside, and founder'd as he leap;
 And ere that Arcite may take any keep,
 He pight^a him on the pommel^b of his head,
 That in the place he lay as he were dead.
 His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow,
 As black he lay as any coal or crow,
 So was the blood yrunnen in his face.

Immediately he was borne out, with sore heart, to the palace of Theseus. There he was cut out of his harness, and brought softly and quickly to a bed, for he was yet alive, and in his senses,

and alway crying after Emily.

Duke Theseus, with all his train, is come home to Athens, his city, in great solemnity and bliss; for notwithstanding this adventure had befallen, he would not have all discomfited. And men said also that Arcite should not die: he should be healed of his hurt. And of another thing they were glad,—that of all the combatants there were none slain, though they were sorely hurt, and especially one, whose breast-bone had been pierced by a spear.

To other woundès, and to broken arms,
 Some hadden salvès, and some hadden charms,
 And pharmacies of herbès.

^a *Pitched.*

^b *The top.*

And also they drank of sage in order to save their lives. This noble duke,

As he well can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And madè revel all the longe night
Unto the strange lordès, as was right.

And truly there was no displeasure held there, but [all was as usual] at jousts and tourneys; for there was no [humiliating] defeat: falling is but an adventure. And to be led by force unto a stake, unyielding, and to be taken by twenty knights—one person all alone, without more—and hurried forth by arms, feet, and toe, and also his steed driven with staves by footmen, both yeomen and also servants,—[all this] was imputed to Palamon,

No villainy;
There may no man clepen it cowardly.

Shortly, Theseus, to stop all rancour and envy, let cry the praise and honour of

As well of one side as of other,
And either side ylike as other's brother;
And gave them giftès after their degree,
And held a feaste fully dayès three;

and conveyed the kings, in a worthy manner, out of the town to a considerable distance.

And home went every man the righte way.
There was no more but "Farewell!" "Have good day!"

The breast of Arcite swells, and the pain increaseth more and more at his heart. The clotted blood, in spite of the skill of the leech, corrupteth and remains in his body; as neither bleeding nor

cupping, nor drink of herbs may help him. The natural expulsive or animal virtue [of the system] may not throw off nor expel the venom. The pipes of his lungs began to swell, and every muscle downwards in his breast is destroyed with the venom and the corruption. Neither vomit nor laxative can he obtain, in order to save his life. The whole region is burst.

Nature hath now no domination :
And certainly, where nature will not werche,*
Farewell physíc, go bear the man to church.

The long and short of the matter is, that Arcite must die. He therefore sends for Emily and for Palamon, that was his dear cousin, and thus spake to them :—

“ Nought may the woful spirit in mine heart
Declare one point of all my sorrow’s smart
To you my lady that I lovè most,
But I bequeath the service of my ghost^b
To you aboven every creäture,
Since that my life ne may no longer ’dure.
Alas the woe ! alas the painès strong
That I for you have suffered, and so long !
Alas the death ! alas mine Emily !
Alas departing of our company !
Alas mine heartès queen ! alas my wife !
Mine heartès body, ender of my life !
What is this world ? what asketh men to have ?—
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Alone,—withouten any company !
Farewell my sweet—farewell mine Emily !
And softe take me in your armès tway
For love of God, and hearkeneth what I say.
I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day agone

* Work.

^b Spirit.

For love of you, and for my jealousy ;
 And Jupiter, so wis,^c my soule gie,
 To speaken of a servant properly,
 With alle circumstānces truely,
 That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthéad,
 Wisdom, humbless, estate, and high kindréd,
 Freedom, and all that 'longeth to that art,
 So Jupiter have of my soule part,
 As in this world right now ne know I none
 So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
 That serveth you, and will do all his life,
 And if that ever ye shall be a wife,
 Forget not Palamon, the gentle man."

And with that word his speech began to fail. For from his feet up to his breast arrived the cold of death that had overtaken him. And yet, moreover, in his two arms the vital strength is lost, and utterly gone. The intellect alone, that dwelled in his sick and sore heart

Gan failen, when the hearte felte death ;
 Duskèd his eyen two, and fail'd his breath :
 But on his lady yet cast he his eye ;
 His laste word was, " Mercy, Emily ! "

His spirit changed house, and went—to that place, from whence, having never myself come, I cannot tell aught of. I cease therefore. I am no divine, and I find nothing about souls in this register. And even though they had written where souls dwell, I have no desire to tell their opinions:—Arcite is cold ; let Mars guide his soul thither.

Shriek'd Emily, and howleth Palamon ;
 And Theseus his sister took anon
 Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.

What boots it to prolong the time by telling how she wept both evening and morning. Women in

^c Sure.

such cases have such sorrow when that their husbands are gone from them, that for the most part they grieve in this way, or else fall into such a malady that at last they certainly die.

Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
Of olde folk, and folk of tender years,
In all the town for death of this Thebán,
For him there weepeth bothe child and man.
So great a weeping was there none certain
When Hector was ybrought, all fresh yslain,
To Troy. Alas! the pity that was there,
Scratching of cheeks, rending eke of hair,
“Why wouldest thou be dead?” these women cry,
“And haddest gold enough, and Emily?”

No man might gladden the duke Theseus except his old father Egeus,

That knew this worldès transmutation,
As he had seen it changen up and down,
Joy after woe, and woe after gladnéss;

and he showed Theseus examples and similar cases.

“Right as there dièd never man,” quoth he,
“That he ne livèd in earth in some degree;
Right so there livèd never man,” he seyde,
“In all this world, that sometime he ne deyde.”
This world n’ is but a thoroughfare full of woe,
And we be pilgrims passing to and fro:
Death is an end of every worldès sore.”

And in addition to all this, he said much more to the effect that he should wisely exhort the people to comfort themselves. Duke Theseus, with busy care, now considers where the sepulchre of good Arcite may be best and most honourably, for one of his degree, made. In the end he determines that there,

^d Died.

where first Arcite and Palamon had the battle between them for love,—in that selfsame grove, sweet and green, where Arcite had poured forth his amorous desires, his complaints, and felt the hot fires of love, he would make the fire wherein to accomplish all the rites of burial. Immediately he commanded them to hack and hew the old oaks, and lay them in a row, in bundles, well prepared to burn. With swift feet his officers run and ride immediately at his commandment. And after this Theseus sent for a bier,

and it all overspread
With cloth of gold, the richest that he had,
And of the samè suit he clad Arcite.
Upon his handès were his glove's white,
Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
He laid him bare the visage on the bier,
Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear.
And, for the people shoulde see him all,
When it was day he brought him to the hall,
That roareth of the crying and the soun.
Then came this woful Theban, Palamon,
With floating beard, and rugged ashy hairs,
In clothès black, ydropped all with tears,
And (passing other of weeping) Emily,
The ruefullest of all the company.

And inasmuch as that the service should be the more noble and rich, in accordance with Arcite's rank, Duke Theseus caused three steeds to be led forth, with trappings of glittering steel, and covered with the arms of Dan Arcite. And upon the steeds, great and white, there sat folk; of whom one bore his shield, another held up his spear in his hands, the third bore with him his Turkish bow, the case and harness of *which* were of burnished gold. With

sorrowful cheer they rode forth a short distance towards the grove.

The noblest of the Greeks present carried the bier upon their shoulders, with slow pace and with eyes red and wet, through the city, by the principal street, that was all hung with black. And, wondrously high, the street was covered over with the same. On the right hand went the old Egeus, on the other side the Duke; with vessels of fine gold in their hands, full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine; also Palamon, with a great company, and afterwards woeful Emily, with fire in her hand, as was then the custom, to do the office of funeral service. There was high labour, and great preparation, at the service of the making of that fire, that with his green top reached the heavens, whilst its arms stretched to a breadth of twenty fathoms; that is to say, the boughs extended so far. Of straw there had been first laid many a load. But how the fire was raised to such a height, or as to the names by which the trees were known,

As oak, fir, birch, aspe,^o alder, holm,^f poplere,
Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestein,^s lind,^h lau-
rère,ⁱ

Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whipul tree,^k

or,

How they were fell'd shall not be told for me;
Nor how the goddes rannen up and down
Disherited of their habitatioun,
In which they wonneden^l in rest and peace,
Nymphès, faunès, and hamadryades;

^o The aspen, so well known for its quivering leaves.

^f The evergreen oak. ^s Chesnut. ^h Linden or lime.

ⁱ Laurel.

^k Unknown.

^l Dwelled.

Nor how the beastès and the birdès all
 Fledden for feare when the wood 'gan fall.
 Nor how the ground aghast was of the light,
 That was not wont to see the sunne bright ;
 Nor how the fire was couchèd^m first with stre,ⁿ
 And then with drye stickès cloven a-three,
 And then with greene wood and spicery,
 And then with cloth of gold and with pierrè ;^o
 And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
 The myrrh, th' incense also, with sweet odour ;
 Nor how Arcita lay among all this,
 Nor what richès about his body is ;
 Nor how that Emily, as was the guise,
 Put in the fire of funeral service ;
 Nor how she swoonèd when she made the fire,
 Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire ;
 Nor what jewélles men in the fire cast,
 When that the fire was great, and burnte fast ;
 Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,
 And of their vestimentes which they wear ;
 And cuppès full of wine, and milk, and blood,
 Into the fire, that burnt as it were wood ;^p
 Nor how the Greekès with a hugè rout
 Three timès riden all the fire about,
 Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
 And thries with their spearès clattering ;
 And thries how the ladies 'gan to cry ;
 Nor how that led was homeward Emily ;
 Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold ;

nor how the lich-wake was held all that night ;
 nor how the Greeks play. I delay not to de-
 scribe these wake-plays ; nor who wrestled best
 naked, anointed with oil, nor who bore him best
 without these disadvantages ; I will not tell either
 how they have all gone home to Athens after the
 play is done, but shortly go to the point, and make
 an end of *my long tale*.

^m Laid.ⁿ Straw.^o Precious stones.^p Mad.

By process, and by length of certain years,
 All stinten^m is the mourning and the tears
 Of Greekès, by one general assent.

Then, it seems, there was a parliament held at Athens upon certain points and cases, among which points an alliance with certain countries was spoken of, as also of receiving from the Thebans full submission. This noble Theseus, therefore, sends for the gentle Palamon, who knew not the cause, nor why, but came in his black clothes, sorrowfully, to the high commandment. Then Theseus sent for Emily.

When they were seated, and the whole place was hushed, and when Theseus had remained for a time, before any word came from his wise breast, with his eyes fixed as was his custom, and with a sad visage, he sighed again and again, and afterwards thus he spake his will.

“ The firste Mover of the cause above,
 When he first made the faire chain of love,
 Great was the effect, and high was his intent ;
 Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant ;
 For with that faire chain of love he bound
 The fire, the air, the water, and the lond
 In certain bondès, that they may not flee :
 That samè prince and mover eke (quoth he)
 Hath ’stablished in this wretched world a-down,
 Certain of dayès and duratiön
 To all that are engendered in this place,
 Over the which day, they ne may not pace,
 All may they yet [the] dayes well abridge.

No authority need be cited, for it is proved by *experience*, but I wish to explain my decision.
Men, then, may by this order discern well that the

^m Stopped.

Mover is stable and eternal. Men (fools only excepted) know well that each part is derived from its whole. For nature hath not taken his commencement from a part or fragment of a thing, but of a thing that is perfect and stable; and which thence descending [or degenerating] becomes corruptible. And therefore in his wise provision, he hath so well guarded his ordinances, that species of things and progress shall endure by successions, not be in themselves eternal. That this is the truth thou mayest understand even by what the eye sees.

Lo! the oak, that hath so long a nourishing
 From time that it 'ginneth first to spring,
 And hath so long a life, as ye may see,
 Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
 Considereth eke, how that the harde stone
 Under our feet, on which we tread and gone,^a
 It wasteth, as it lieth by the way.
 The broade river sometimes waxeth drey.^o
 The greате townès see we wane and wend;
 Then may ye see that all thing hath an end.

Of man and woman we see also that they must
 needs be in one term or the other, that is to say,

in youth or elles age
 He must be dead, the King, as shall a page;
 Some in his bed, some in the deepe sea,
 Some in the largè field, as ye may see:
 There helpeth nought, all gôth that ilke way;
 Then may I say that alle thing must dey.^p

Who maketh this but Jupiter, the king? who is
 prince, and cause of all?—converting all into his
 proper will, from which, to say truth, it is derived.
 And against this it avails not for any living
 creature of any rank to strive.

^a *Go.*^o *Dry.*^p *Die.*

Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To maken virtue of necessity ;

and take that well which we cannot decline ; and which is due to us all. And whoso murmureth aught commits a folly, and is a rebel to Him who guides everything. And certainly a man hath the most honour to die in his flower and excellence, and when he is sure of his good name. Then hath he dishonoured neither his friend nor himself.

And gladder ought his friend be of his death,
When with honour is yelden up his breath,
Than when his name appalled is for age,
For all forgotten is his vassalage.

Then is it best, for a worthy reputation, to die when a man's name is at the best. The contrary of all this is wilfulness. Why do we murmur ? why have we gloom that good Arcite, the flower of chivalry, is departed with duty and honour,

Out of this foule prison of this life ?

Why are his cousin and his wife here, who love him so well, in discontent concerning his welfare ? Can he thank them ? Nay, God knows, never a bit. They offend both his soul and themselves ; and yet they may not amend their desires ! How may I conclude of this long series, but that after sorrow I advise that we be merry and thank Jupiter for all his grace ; and before we depart from hence, I advise that we make of two sorrows one perfect and everlasting joy. And look ! where there is now here most sorrow, I will begin and make amendment.

Sister,," quoth he, " this is my full assent,
With all the advice here of my parliament,

That gentle Palamon, your owen knight,
That serveth you with will, and heart, and might,
And ever hath done since ye first him knew,
That ye shall of your grace upon him rue,
And taken him for husband and for lord ;
Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.

Let us now see your womanly pity. He is a king's
brother's son, pardie ; and though he were a poor
bachelor, since he hath served you so many a year,
and hath had for you such great adversity, it
must be considered, believe me ; for gentle mercy
is due to past

right."

Then said he thus to Palamon the knight :
" I trow there needeth little sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing.
Come near, and take your lady by the hand."

And shortly the bond of matrimony was made
between them by all the counsel of the baronage ;
and thus

with alle bliss and melody

Hath Palamon ywedded Emily.
And God, that all this widè world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it dear ybought ;
For now is Palamon in alle weal
Living in bliss, in riches, and in hele.*
And Emily him loveth so tenderly,
And he her serveth all so gently,
That never was there no worde them between
Of jealousy,

nor of other evil.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily.

* Health.

REMARKS ON THE 'KNIGHT'S TALE.'

CHAUCER took the story that forms the subject of the 'Knight's Tale' either from Boccaccio or from some older author familiar to them both—it matters not which for our present purpose—and Dryden took the same story from Chaucer. It may tend somewhat to illustrate generally the character of the first great English poet to compare his 'Knight's Tale' with the 'Teseide' of the Italian poet on the one hand, and with the 'Knight's Tale' of Dryden on the other.

Boccaccio devotes the two first books to the mere antecedents of the story, as the war with the Amazons; the protracted stay of Theseus in their country after his marriage with the Amazonian Queen Hypolita; his return towards Athens; the meeting with the ladies who have lost their husbands; the campaign against Creon; and the finding and bringing back with Theseus to Athens the two young knights: and it is only with the third book that the story really begins, by the introduction of Emily into the garden that surrounds the prison of Palamon and Arcite. Chaucer dismisses the whole of these incidents in some two hundred lines.

Boccaccio makes Arcite see Emily first; Chaucer gives that advantage to Palamon, and thereby makes the commencement harmonize better with the end of the story, as well as with the more *gentle loving* character that the English poet has *assigned to the successful rival*. But perhaps one of the most remarkable of all the features of the

contrast between the poets, is their view of the effect upon the two knights of their mutually seeing and loving Emily; in Boccaccio they are the quintessence of amiability to each other; and one is tempted to ask why the story should continue; it really does not seem as though it would matter much—even to the parties themselves—which of the two should obtain the lady; but turn to Chaucer, and who will forget the scene after once reading it? It is a grand and difficult position—that of two very dearly attached friends suddenly changed by the jealousies of love into fierce and unappeasable enemies; but most grandly and triumphantly does Chaucer pass through it. Even in little touches, the difference between the two poets is no less strikingly apparent. Chaucer, with consummate art, seeing that the whole tenor of the story, which is in strict accordance with the feelings and customs of the middle ages, does not admit of the result being determined by the will or wishes of Emily, keeps her shining like a star over the lovers to guide their wandering barks, but also as distant as a star. Boccaccio comparatively glorifies her by allowing it to be understood that she sees the lovers at their prison windows as they pass in the garden, and is not displeased with their admiration.

Arcite, by the friendly interposition of Perithous, is at free; but, lover like, has no sooner escaped the evil he dreaded of confinement, than he repines at another evil—his absence from the place where he might at least hope to see his mistress. He desires to return. Boccaccio makes this a difficult and circuitous business. Arcite must first go into the service of *Menelaus at Mycenæ*, then into that

of Peleus at Ægina, and so at last he reaches the court of Theseus at Athens, and takes the same position there; and it must be acknowledged all this suits very well with the patient, amiable, not particularly anxious young gentleman that Boccaccio loves to describe. Chaucer, however, brings his Arcite back at once to the place where he wishes to be. Of course Chaucer still keeps Emily aloof from any intimate personal knowledge of Arcite; Boccaccio makes her know him, when all else are ignorant of his true character.

The same directness and artistical skill characterise Chaucer's management of the great scene in the grove; the same want of both qualities characterise Boccaccio's. In the former, Arcite, in prosperity, comes as a lover seeking solitude, and there, while pouring out his amorous complaints, is overheard by the miserable Palamon, who has the very night before broken prison—a position of the most stirring and suggestive nature; but in the latter it is frittered away by the complicity of the arrangements required for its production. There must be a servant, one Pamphilo, to overhear Arcite in the grove, and to bring the news to Palamon, and to induce him to try to break prison in order to get out to fight his rival. And then when they do meet, it is quite a lesson in politeness to see their courtesies towards each other, their patience in expostulation—and, even at the last, their reluctance to fight. How unlike is all this to the chivalrous feeling that prompts Chaucer's Arcite to find food and arms for his half-famished and totally undefended rival before fighting him, or the terrible *passions that actuate both when they do fight, as described in these most magnificent lines,—*

hinketh—Here cometh my mortal enemy ;
when fail he must be dead or I.

s interrupts their fight ; and the more
combat with a hundred knights a-side is de-
upon ; these are collected, and Boccaccio
gives us the individual descriptions one
her of no inconsiderable portion of the
Chaucer gives but two portraits—devotes
strength to them, and the result is what
ave been expected—those portraits are
e especial gems of the poem. And as we
ycurgus, wrapped in his bear's skin, coal
age, standing on high in his car of gold,
great white dogs that follow him,—or of
, who

as a lion, he his looking cast,

our respect for the remainder of the
sised to a high pitch by the contemplation
ch examples.

er of the combat arrives, and the lovers go

CANTERBURY TALES.

casion, and of the magnificence of Theseus, by asking the latter build temples to Mars, Venus, and Diana, in connexion with the amphitheatre he raises, and upon which all the skill of the time is expended in works of painting and sculpture. Chaucer describes these temples; and so by the most natural means we obtain a series of pictures that can be described by no other word that shall at once convey a sense of the feeling, and of the imaginative power that pervades them, than supernatural.

And now, while the story hurries along with rapidity in Chaucer, in Boccaccio it seems as though it never would end. One whole book is devoted to the account of the battle, instead of the few but marvellous lines of the English poet, so descriptive of the confusion and tumult of the affray, and where you in vain strive to follow any one set of actors or incidents—others so continually cross the view and draw away the attention:—

*He through the thickest of the throng 'gan thrust;—
There stumblen steedès strong, and down gó'th all;—
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball;—
He foineth on his foe with a truncheon—
And he him hurtleth with his foe adown, &c.*

One book, again, of the Teseide is occupied with the accident to Arcite, and his marriage on the bed of death with Emily; another with the funeral of the persons killed in the combat, and the death of Arcite after expressing his generous desires for the union of Palamon and Emily; and yet a third with Arcite's funeral and its adjuncts; and as though there really was an invincible objection on the part of the author to end before he

was compelled by utter lack of matter, Palamon and Emily actually make formal speeches in the last book, in order to *decline* the match, which gives opportunity to other speeches to induce them to consent, as at last they do. Compare all this with the few but delightful touches of Chaucer; as when Theseus turns to Palamon after declaring his purpose,

“I trow there needeth little sermoning
To maken you assenten to this thing,” &c.

From these notices of the two works, it will be seen that the difference in length between the two poems is no proof that Chaucer did not take Boccaccio for his original. The 12,000 verses of the one *must* be narrowed by the process we have described into some such number as the 2000 of the other. So much for Boccaccio and Chaucer. Let us now see how it is with Chaucer and Dryden.

There can be no doubt that a large—perhaps the chief—portion of Dryden's popularity has been founded upon his tales from Chaucer, and especially upon his version of the Knight's Tale. Neither can there be any doubt that the tale itself is chiefly known to English readers through him. It will now be our duty to endeavour to show how undeserved that portion of his popularity has been, how inadequate for the reader, and how injurious to the original author is his version. We shall do this in a very simple and, as we conceive, impartial manner, by placing in immediate connection with each other those parallel passages, most of which would, in all probability, be selected by the respective admirers of the two poets as their best. *We have merely to premise that Dryden follows Chaucer with such an evident determination neither*

to omit nor to alter a single feature or incident of the story, he so tracks his every thought, he so constantly even echoes his words where convenient, line for line, that when he *does* alter, we must conclude that the antiquated diction impelled him, or that he seeks to improve: a noble ambition, but difficult to accomplish under the circumstances. When Dryden took up the Knight's Tale for *translation*, he forgot, if indeed he had ever properly known, *Chaucer*.

We commence with that most charming of descriptions and pictures, the May-morning, and Emily playing in the garden. Thus writes

CHAUCER—

Thus passeth year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell onès in a morrow of May,
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily upon his stalke green,
And fresher than the May with flow'ers new,
For with the rosè-colour strove her hue
(I n'ot which was the finer of them two),
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all ready dight,^d
For May will have no sluggardy a-night;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
And saith, Arise! and do thine observance.

Now it is one of the most unfathomable of problems to us, how—the above existing—the following could have come into existence in connection with the honoured name of

DRYDEN—

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May)

^d Dressed.

The young Emilia, fairer to be seen,
 Than the fair lily on the flowery green,
 More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,
 (For with the rosy colour strove her hue),
 Walk'd, as her custom was, before the day
 To do th' observance due to sprightly May:
 For sprightly May commands our youth to keep
 The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard
 sleep;
 Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves;
 Inspires new flames, revives extinguish'd loves."

Sprightly May indeed—and a sprightly poet; but alas! for Chaucer—all his exquisite simplicity gone! Nor does the mischief end there. We remember once hearing an air by Rossini, in which a peculiar and very lovely melody came again and again, but ever so charmingly, and with such a new sense of freshness, that it seemed to us as though some happy spirit had got hold of it and could not let it go again, but from time to time *must* burst out with new animation just when you most expected he would cease. Some such feeling seems to us to pervade the lines

And fresher than the May with flow'ers *new*,
 For with the rosè-colour strove her *hue*
 (*I n'ot which was the finer of them two*),
 Ere it was day, as she was wont to *do*, &c.

Well, perhaps it may be presumptuous to quarrel with Dryden for not perceiving and retaining what seems to us the melody of these lines; but what can be said for the omission of one of the lines themselves, nay the most charming of the whole—the line we have marked in italics? He had not a word *to alter had he* desired to include it. *Nay, some patriotic printer to-morrow might*

insert it in a new edition of his works. Rhyme and reason are both ready.

We hardly like to say it—but our readers can judge for themselves as to the truth of the statement—that if there be one passage more than ordinarily beautiful among the countless beautiful passages of Chaucer, then is Dryden sure to be more than ordinarily careful to show his want of appreciation of it by his destructive alterations. Thus is it with the exquisite lines by

CHAUCER—

The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Saluteth with her song the morrow gray,
And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright,
That all the Orient laugheth of the sight,
And with his streamès drieth in the greves
The silver droppès hanging on the leaves.

Can anything be conceived more *freshly* beautiful, in *words* as well as in thought, feeling, and poetry? Here at least the *translator* need not to alter a letter even for his own purposes. Yet we have from

DRYDEN—

The morning lark, the messenger of day,
Saluted in her song the morning gray;
And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight;
He with his tepid rays the rose renews,
And licks the dropping leaves, and dries the dew.

Here is addition, it must be owned. We have not only gained the “morning lark,” but the “*morning gray*,” &c., and what have we lost? Oh, merely *the expression so delightful to old-fashioned poetical ears, the “morrow gray” and the image of the*

"*busy lark*," now darting hither and thither, now with its wings beating upon the air, ascending into the blue depth above till she seems but a dark speck, and at last disappears, and you think she is quite gone; but no, the sunshine flashes upon her breast, and you are again following with renewed interest the movements of the "*busy lark*." One line of the description in question seems to have so puzzled Dryden, that he was obliged to parallel the feat of cutting the Gordian knot by lengthening the Homeric line. We read in Chaucer—

And all the Orient laugheth of the sight.

In order fully to appreciate this glorious line, at once so musically expressive and so steeped in poetic loveliness, and which belongs to a class that even in works of the highest character occur but comparatively seldom—one should repeat it aloud, and feel how it makes the spirit as well as the voice climb; until as we reach that most charming of words—Orient—we seem to look down over a whole happy universe; and to laugh from very sympathy with it, as we descend again with the concluding portion of the line. Now let us also read aloud the *improved* line, taking, however, like leapers, a good run at starting to make us sure of getting safely over:

That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight.

Thus were "translated" Chaucer's descriptions of external nature.

Let us now go to higher matter—to the heart of man—and the tempestuous passions that sometimes toss it about—shoreless and anchorless, as when Arcite finds himself only released from his *bodily captivity in Athens* to feel more heavil

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spiritual bondage in which love keeps him at ebes—so far away from his mistress. The constant should be hardly a fair one to the elder poet as he was not a tragic dramatist like Dryden—d might therefore be supposed to have less adied the use of the tragic dramatist's mightiest eapon—pathos.

CHAUCER's *Description of the Despairing Lover.*

So muchel sorrow had never creäture
That is, or shall be, while the world may 'dure ;
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him beraft,^{*}
That lean he wax'd, and dry as is a shaft ;
His eyen hollow, and grisly to behold ;
His huë fallow, and pale as ashes cold.
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his moan ;
And if he hearde song or instrument
Then would he weep, he mighte not be stent.*
So feeble were his spirits and so low,
And changèd so, that no man coulde know
His speeche, ne his voice, though men it heard.

Does the reader remember in the whole range of poetry a more pathetic description than this? There should be one—Dryden's, who undertook to re-write it. Here is the result. Chaucer began humbly, as with a kind of awe of the emotions he contemplated and was about to describe, and as ~~one who saw~~ good artistical reasons for so doing Dryden!—he is in the very thick of the tur at once.

Dryden's *Description of the Despairing Lover.*

He raved with all the madness of despair,
He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair ;

* Bereft.

* Stopped.

ere the poet takes a little breath, and thinks he is begun in a somewhat high key, so continues,

Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears,—
 And now he really must drop into a more comfortable and chatty vein, so he adds,—

For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears.
 His eye-balls in their hollow sockets sink ;
 Bereft of sleep, he loathes his meat and drink ;
 He withers at his heart, and looks as wan
 As the pale spectre of a murdered man :
That pale turns yellow, and his face receives
 The faded hue of sapless boxen leaves.
 In solitary groves he makes his moan,
 Walks early out, and ever is alone :
 Nor, mix'd in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares,
 But sighs when songs and instruments he hears :
 His spirits are so low, his voice is drown'd,
 He hears as from afar, or in a swoond,
 Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound. }

How there is undoubtedly original power and beauty in the last three lines, though we think they are no improvement on the less ornate but more suggestive lines of Chaucer ; but as to all the rest of the description, how could Dryden rest peacefully in his bed after writing it ? How could he compare this line,

And wailing all the night, making his moan,
 With this—

In solitary groves he makes his moan,
 And yet go on to prepare hosts of similar examples for future volumes of *Curiosities of Literature* ?

One more illustration, and we have done. Since either in describing external nature, nor human notions, Dryden does nought but injure—and, it

must be said, vulgarise his original—does he really improve upon him as he takes the very highest poetic flights, and leaves the every-day for the supernatural world! Alas! It is precisely through his deficiency of the subtler qualities of the art and faculty divine that he fails in the cases we have examined, and the failure therefore becomes the more conspicuous as we ascend to those which are of “imagination all compact.” Such is that most wonderful of poetical descriptions—

CHAUCER's Temple of Mars.

First on the wall was painted a forêt,
In which there wonneth^t neither man nor beast,
With knotty, gnarry, barren trees old,
Of stubbes sharp and hideous to behold;
In which there ran a rumble and a swough
As though a storm should bursten every bough.
And downward from a hill under a bent,^u
There stood the temple of Mars armipotent,
Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of which th' entry
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see;
And thereout came a rage, and such a vise^v
That it made all the gates for to rise;
The northern light in at the doore shone,
For window on the wall ne was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern, &c.

And thus for above seventy lines does the poet continue, adding image to image, each of them of the grandest description—but yet all so subordinated by the *unearthly feeling* that pervades them, that you cannot *dwell* upon them as they deserve, and as you would did they occur in the works of a lesser poet—but on—on they hurry you as though

^t *Dwelleth.* ^u Bend or slope. ^v Roar.

you sailed by night down some strange and majestic river, where stream after stream—visible only by the weird light that shines on their gloomy and terrible surface—pours in and swells the mighty tide that bears you irresistibly along—whither you know not—nor does the mighty magician who has raised all this supernatural world around give you time, or leave you the desire to inquire; breathless, you resign yourself to his will and bidding. But Dryden comes—and the whole is changed. Plain as poet can speak, he says, “See what a description of the supernatural I’ll give you!” and you do see as the result of his effort a very powerful poetical passage—and *John Dryden—the poet*—making it into the bargain.

DRYDEN’S Temple of Mars.

The landscape was a forest wide and bare;
Where neither beast nor human kind repair;
The fowl, that scent afar the borders fly,
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.

A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,
And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found;
Or woods with knots and gnars deform’d and old,
Headless the most, and hideous to behold:
A rattling tempest through the branches went,
That stripped ’em bare, and one sole way they bent.
Heav’n froze above severe, the clouds congeal,
And through the crystal vault appeared the standing hail.

Such was the face without: a mountain stood
Threat’ning from high, and overlook’d the wood.
Beneath the low’ring brow, and on a bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent;
The frame of burnish’d steel, that cast a glare
From far, and seem’d to thaw the freezing air.

A strait, long entry to the temple led,
 Blind with high walls, and horror over head ;
 Thence issued such a blast, and hollow roar,
 As threatened from the hinge to heave the door ;
 In, through that door, a northern light there shone ;
 'T was all it had, for windows there were none.

It were an endless and a most unthankful task to point out how even in the details, or individual thoughts of this description, Dryden found himself unable to re-produce without injury what he had before him. One line alone is enough to decide the whole character of the relation of the two poets, looked at even as regards their business skill. Mark how in the following line every word seems like some new and additional feature made visible by so many lightning glimpses—

With knotty—gnarry—barren—trees—old ;

why, the most finished lines of Pope, in which sense and sound echo each other, are toys as compared with this. Yet Dryden has not a trace of it. He is content with—

Woods with knots and gnars deform'd and old.

Of the remainder of the respective poems, let two or three examples suffice :—

CHAUCER'S

Smiler with the knife under the cloak,

becomes in

DRYDEN—

*Next stood hypocrisy with holy leer,
 Soft smiling, and demurely looking down,
 But hid the dagger underneath the gown.*

Palamon's appeal to Venus, when he tells her he has no language to tell the torment he is in, and then adds with the most moving pathos and simplicity

(CHAUCER)—

I am so *confuse*, that I cannot say,

becomes in

DRYDEN—

——I feel too much to pray.

Lastly, one of the most magnificent images that ever poet expressed in words—that where Arcite thus addresses Mars,—who

CHAUCER—

hast in every regne, and every land,
Of armes *all the bridle in thine hand*,"

is thus translated by

DRYDEN—

——everywhere thy power is known;
The fortune of the fight is all thy own.

We have yet two more of these parallel passages to give; and a very amusing contrast they furnish. It was written by

CHAUCER.—

Men may the old out-run, but not out-rede;

that is, not outstrip them in counsel and wisdom. But we find in

DRYDEN—

For this advantage Age from youth has won,
As not to be out-ridden—though out-run.

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So that old gentlemen, it appears, should take to horseback in order to rival their sons and grandsons, when they can no longer compete with them on foot.

We may observe, in conclusion, that the Knight's Tale was written before the Canterbury Tales generally; and, it should seem, had not been appreciated as it deserved. In Chaucer's notice of his own works in the Legend of Good Women, he mentions this tale under the title of 'Al the Love of Palamon and Arcite of Thebes,' and it is added that "the story is known little." Not the less, however, did the poet place it *first* among Canterbury Tales; and posterity has more justified the appeal thus made to it.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.



THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

O scathful harm, condition of povért,^a
 With thirst, with cold, with hunger, so confounded,
 To asken help thee shameth in thine heart :
 If thou none ask, so sore art thou ywounded,
 That very need unwrappeth all thy wound hid.
 Mangre ^b thine head, thou must, for indigence,
 Or steal or beg, or borrow thy dispense.^c

Thou blamest Christ, and sayest bitterly, he divideth unequally temporal riches. Thou blamest sinfully thy neighbour, saying thou hast little, and he all. By my faith, sayest thou, sometime he shall reckon for this when he shall be burning in the everlasting fire ;

For he nought helpeth need-ful in their need.

Hearken what is the saying of the wise—It is better to die than to have indigence ; thy very neighbours will despise thee ;

If thou be poor, farewell thy reverence.

Take, also, this saying of the wise man—All the days of the poor are full of evil and suffering. Beware, therefore, lest thou come to that point.

^a Poverty.

^b In spite of.

^c Expense, or expenditure.

If thou be poor, thy brother hateth thee,
 And all thy friendès flee from thee, alas !
 O riche merchants ! full of weal be ye,
 O noble, O prudent folk ! as in this case,
 Your baggès be not filled with ambes-ace,
 But with size-cinque ;^c that runneth for your chance ;
 At Christenmass merry may ye dance.

Ye seeken land and sea for your winnings ;
 As wisè folk ye knowen all th^e estate
 Of regnès ;^d ye be fathers of tidings,
 And talès both of peace and of debate :
 I were right now of talès desolate,
 N'ere^e that a merchant, gone is many a year
 Me taught a Talè which that ye shall hear.

In Syria there once dwelt a company of merchants, rich, grave, and honest men, who sent far and wide their spices, cloths of gold, and satins rich of hue. Their merchandize was so cheap and novel, that every one values highly the dealing with them, and to sell to them their wares. Now it befell that the masters of the company, whether for business or enjoyment, would go to Rome ; no other messenger would they send thither, but go themselves. And in such a place as they thought advantageous for their purposes they took up their lodging. These merchants have sojourned in the town a certain time, according to their pleasure, and it so befell that the excellent renown of the Emperor's daughter, dame Custance, was reported with every circumstance to these Syrian merchants, daily, in such manner as I shall describe to you :—

^c That is to say, not with a pair of aces, so valueless in the *game of dice*, but with sixes and fives, the highest numbers that can be thrown.

^d *Realms.*

^e Were it not.

This was the common voice of every man :
 Our Emperor of Romè, God him see,
 A daughter hath, that since the world began,
 —To reckon as well her goodness as beauty—
 N' as never such another as is she ;
 I pray to God in honour her sustene,^f
 And would she were of all Európe the Queen.

In her is high beauty withouten pride,
 Youthe withouten green-head^s or folly :
 To all her workès virtue is her guide ;
 Humbleth hath slayen in her tyranny ;
 She is mirróur of alle courtesy ;
 Her heart is very chamber of holiness ;
 Her hand mínister of freedom for almés.^h

And all this voice was sooth, as God is true.

But now let us turn again to our purpose. When these merchants have newly freighted their ships, and when they have seen this blissful maiden, they went gladly home to Syria, and transacted their business, and lived in prosperity, as of old. It so happened that the merchants stood in favour with the Sultan of Syria ; for when they came from any strange place he would of his benignity and courtesy hospitably entertain them, and busily examine their tidings of sundry kingdoms, in order to learn the wonders that they might have heard or seen.

^f Sustain.

^s The history of words presents many very curious features ; and no word more so than that which forms the subject of this comment. What can be more forcibly expressive or beautiful than this likening of the inexperienced, unripe mind of youth to the *green*, tender, immature growths of vegetation ? but, alas ! “to what base uses we may return, Horatio ?”—the word, like many others of equally distinguished origin, is now unknown beyond the regions of vulgar slang.

^h *Alms*, charity.

Among other things, they told him especially of
 Dame Custance such great nobleness, in such an
 earnest and serious manner, that this Sultan hath
 caught so great a pleasure in having her image in
 his continual remembrance,

That all his lust and all his busy cure
 Was for to love her while his life may 'dure.

Haply in that large book which men call the heaven,
 it was written with stars when he was born,

That he for love should have his death, alas!
 For in the starrès, clearer than is glass,
 Is written, God wot, whoso could it read,
 The death of every man withouten drede.¹

In starrès many a winter there befor
 Was writ the death of Hector, A'chilles,
 Of Pompey, Julius, ere they were born;
 The Strife of Thebes; and of Hercules,
 Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
 The death; but mennès wittès be so dull
 That no wight can well read it at the full.

This Sultan sent for his privy council, and, shortly
 to pass over this matter, declared to them his intent.
 He said to them that certainly unless he might have
 the grace to have Custance within a little time he
 was but as one dead; and he charged them, as
 their sovereign, to shape out for his life some
 remedy:—

Diversè men diversè thingès saiden;
 They argumentes casten up and down;
 Many a subtle reason forth they laiden;
 They spoken of magic and abusion;

¹ Doubt.

But, finally, they see no advantage in such discourse, nor in any other way except marriage. Then they saw therein such difficulty, to speak reasonably and plain, because there was such diversity between the laws of the two countries, that they said they believed no Christian prince would be willing to

“Wedden his child under our laws sweet,
That us was given by Mahound our prophete.”

And he answered—

“Rather than I lose
Custance, I will be christened doubtless.
I must be here, I may none other choose;
I pray you hold your arguments in peace;
Save my life, and be not reckless
To gotten her that hath my life in cure,
For in this woe I may not long endure.”

What needeth it to dilate more? I say, by embassy and treaty, and by the mediation of the Pope, and all the church, and all the chivalry, to the increase of Christ's dear law, and the destruction of Mahometanism—the parties are presently agreed:—How that the Sultan and his baronage, and his subjects should be christened, and he shall have Custance in marriage, and certain gold, of what quantity I know not, and give sufficient sureties. The same agreement is sworn to by each party.

Now, fair Custance, Almighty God thee guide!

Some men, I guess, would expect that I should tell all the provision made by the Emperor, in his nobleness, for his daughter Dame Custance; but they may know well that such great ordinances as were arranged in so high a matter, can be told

by no man in so little a clause. Bishops are ready to accompany her; also lords, ladies, and knights of renown, and plenty of other people. And it was notified throughout the city, that every one with great devotion should pray to Christ that he would receive this marriage with favour, and speed this voyage.

The day is come for their departure—I say the woeful, fatal day is come—and there may be no longer tarrying. One and all address themselves to go forwards. Custance, overcome with sorrow, full pale, arose, and addresses herself to go—for well she sees there is no other end. Alas! what wonder that she wept, to be sent from friends who so tenderly preserved her, to a strange nation; and be bound under subjection to one whose character she knoweth not. Husbands be all good, and ever have been; that wives know; I dare say no more.

“Father,” she said, “thy wretched child Custance,
Thy younge daughter, fostered up so soft,
And ye, my mother, my sovereign pleasance
Over all thing,—

Christ alone excepted—Custance, your child, re-commendeth herself often unto your grace, for I shall go to Syria, and my eyes shall never see you more.

Alas! unto the Barbare nation
I muste go, since that it is your will;
But Christ that starv'd for our redemption,
So give me grace his hestès¹ to fulfil.

As for me, wretched woman, it is no matter though
I die—

¹ Commands.

Women are born to thralldom and penance,
And to be under mannès governance."

I trow that neither at Troy, when Pyrrhus broke the wall, or burnt Ilion—nor at the city of Thebes, when that was burnt—nor at Rome, when Hannibal thrice vanquished the Romans, and did them so much harm, was there heard such tender weeping for pity as there was in the chamber of Custance at her parting ;

But forth she must, whether she weep or sing.

O first moving cruel firmament, with thy diurnal sway that crowdest ever, and hurtlest from East to West, all the bodies that naturally would hold another direction—thy crowding set the heaven in such array at the beginning of this fierce voyage, that cruel Mars hath ruined the marriage. Unfortunate ascendant tortous !—the lord, alas ! falls helpless out of his angle into the darkest of the houses. O Mars ! O Atyzar ! O feeble Moon, unhappy is thy state ! thou knittest thyself there where thou art not received ; thou wert well from thence where thou art turned away. Imprudent Emperor of Rome !—alas ! was there no philosopher in all thy town ? Is there no one time better than another in such cases ? In voyages is there no election, and especially for persons of high condition, not even when a time^j may be known from a birth ? Alas ! we are still too ignorant or too slow.

^j A root [Chaucer's word] or radix in astrology, is, says Tyrrwhitt, "any certain time taken at pleasure, from which, as an era, the celestial motions are to be computed." But in the text root is applied to a time not taken at pleasure, but from calculations founded on the period of birth, and as the end rather than the beginning of the astrologer's labours. The root or time here mentioned appears to imply the period

To ship is brought this woful faire maid
Solemnely, with every circumstance :
" Now Jesu Christ be with you all," she said.
There n' is no more, but " Farewell, fair Custance."
She paineth her to make good countenance ;

and thus I leave her to sail forth.

The mother of the Sultan, a well of vices, having perceived her son's whole intent, and that he will leave his old sacrifices, immediately sends for her council ; and when they are come to know what she meant, and are assembled in company, she seated herself, and said—" Ye know, lords, every one of you, how that my son is about to leave the holy laws of our Alkoran, given by God's messenger Mahomet. But one vow to great God I promise, the life shall rather start out of my body than Mahomet's law out of mine heart ! What should betide us from this new law but thralldom to our bodies, and penance and hell afterwards, for having renounced our belief in Mahomet ? But, lords, will ye all bind yourselves, that as I shall say and advise, ye will assent, and I will make us safe for evermore ?" They swore, and every man consented to stand by her side, to live and die with her ; and that each in the best manner he could, to strengthen her, should try to secure his friends. So she takes the enterprise in hand. She then says to them all—" We shall first feign to take Christianity. The cold water [of baptism] shall grieve us but little. And I shall make such a feast and revel, that, as I trow, I shall requite the Sultan.

when Custance should have started on her voyage ; and for neglecting to discover which the grave and sententious Man of Law blames her father.

For though his wife be christen'd never so white,^{*}
 She shall have need to wash away the red,
 Though she a font of water with her led."

O Sultaneess, root of iniquity ! Thou Virago ! thou
 second Semiramis ! O serpent under woman's form,
 like to the serpent deep bound in hell !

O feignèd woman, all that may confound
 Virtue and innocence, through thy malice
 Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.

O envious Satan ! since that day thou wert chased
 from our heritage,

Well knowest thou to woman the olde way.

Thou madest Eve bring us into servitude—thou
 now wilt undo this Christian marriage. When
 thou wouldest beguile—alas ! alas ! the time !—
 thou still makest woman thine instrument.

The Sultaneess, whom I thus blame and stigma-
 tize, let her council privily go their way. Why
 should I longer tarry in my tale ? On a certain
 day she rideth to the Sultan, and said to him, she
 would renounce her faith, and take Christianity
 from the priest's hands, and that she repented she
 had been so long a heathen. She besought

him to do her that honour,
 That she might have the Christian folk to feast ;
 " To plesen them I will do my labour."
 The Sultan saith, " I will do at your hest,"
 And kneeling thankèd her of that request ;
 So glad he was he n'ist not what to say :
 She kissed her son, and home she goeth her way.

The Christian people reach the land in Syria, in a
 great and solemn company. Hastily the Sultan

^{*} Or made pure by the water of baptism.

sends a message, first to his mother, and then to all the country round, saying that out of doubt his wife was coming, and praying them to ride towards the Queen, in order to sustain the honour of his kingdom.

Great was the press, and rich was the array
Of Syrians and Romans met in fere.¹
The mother of the Sultan, rich and gay,
Receivèd her with all so glad a cheer
As any mother might her daughter dear;
And to the nexte city there beside,
A softe pace solemnely they ride.

The triumph of Julian, I trow, of which Lucan maketh such a vaunt, was not more royal nor more curious than the assemblage of this blissful host. But this scorpion, this wicked spirit, the Sultanness, for all her flattering, plotted beneath to sting full mortally.

The Sultan cometh himself soon after, so royally, that it is wondrous to tell, and welcomed her with all joy and bliss; and thus in mirth and joy I leave them. It is of the fruit of the matter that I speak. When the proper time came, men thought it best to cease their revel, and go to their rest.

And now the time has arrived that the Old Sultanness ordained for the feast of which I told you. And to the feast the Christian people severally address them,

Yea, bothe young and old.
There may men feast, and royalty behold,
And dainties more than I can you devise:
But all too dear they bought it ere they rise.

O sudden woe, that art ever successor to worldly

¹ Company.

bliss ! Sprinkled with bitterness is the end of the joys of our worldly labour ! Woe occupieth the end of our gladness ! Harken to this counsel for thy security :

Upon thy gladde day have in thy mind
The unwarè woe ^m of harm that cometh behind.

For shortly, to tell it in brief, the Sultan and the Christians, every one, are all cut down, and stabbed at the board, Dame Custance alone excepted. This old Sultanness, this cursed crone, with her friends, hath done this cursed deed ; for she would herself rule all the country. Nor was there one of the Syrians who had been converted, and that knew of the Sultan's counsel, but was also hewed down before he could escape ; and with foot-hot speed they have immediately taken Custance,

And in a ship all steerèless (God^e wot !)
They have her set, and bidden her learne sail
Out of Surrie ⁿ again-ward to Itaille.^o

A certain treasure that she had brought thither, and, truth to say, also plenty of provisions, they have given her ; and she had also clothes.

And forth she saileth in the salte sea.
O my Custance, full of benignity !
O Emperorès younge daughter dear !
He that is Lord of Fortune be thy steer.^p

She blesseth her,^q and with full piteous voice,
Unto the cross of Christ thus saide she :
“ O cear, O wealful altar, holy cross,

^m That is to say, the woe that steals upon us unawares.

ⁿ Syria.

^o Italy.

^p Pilot, guide.

^q Herself.

Red of the Lambe's blood, full of pity,
That wash'd the world from the old iniquity,
Me from the fiend, and from his clawes keep,
That day that I shall drenchen' in the deep.

Victorious tree ! Protection of true !
That only worthy werè for to bear
The King of Heaven, with his woundès new—
The whitè Lamb, that hurt was with a spear ;
Flemer* of fiendès, out of him, and here,
On which thy limbès faithfully extend,
Me keep, and give me might my life t' amend."

Yearès and dayès fleet this créature
Throughout the sea of Greece, unto the Strait
Of Maroc, as it was her adventure.
On many a sorry meal now may she bait ;
After' her death full often may she wait,
Ere that the wilde wavès will her drive
Unto the place thereas she shall arrive.

Men might ask why she was not slain ? Also, who saved her at the feast ? I answer to that demand, Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave, where every one but he, master or servant, was devoured by the lions before he could escape ? None but God, that Daniel bare in his heart. It pleased God to show his wonderful miracles in Custance, in order that we should see his mighty works. Christ, who is to every harm the remedy, often doth things, as learned men know, by certain means for certain ends, that appear dark to man's wit. Our ignorance does not allow us to understand his prudent provisions. Now, since she was not slain at the feast, who kept her from drowning in the sea ? Who kept Jonas in the maw of the fish till he was

* Be drowned.

* Banisher.

† Seeking or watching for.

outed up at Nineveh? Well may men know it as only He who kept the Hebrew people from rowning when, with dry feet, they passed through the sea.

Who bade the foure spirits of Tempést,
That power have to annoyen land and sea,
Both north and south, and also west and east,
Annoyen neither sea, nor land, nor tree?
Soothly the Cómmander of that was he
That from the tempest aye this woman kept,
As well when she awoke as when she alept.

Where might this woman meat and drinke have?
Three years and more how lasteth her victaille?
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave,
Or in desért?—No wight but Christ, *sans faille*.
Five thousand folk! it was as great marvaillé,
With loaves five and fishes two to feed.
God sent his foison^a at her greate need.

he driveth forth into our ocean, and throughout our wide sea, until at last under a fort, the name of which I know not, far in Northumberland, the waves cast her, and the ship stuck so fast in the sand that it would not move throughout the next day. It was the will of Christ that she should say. The constable of the castle goes down to see the wreck, and, in searching through the ship,

He found this weary woman, full of care.

And he found also the treasure that she brought. He besought him, in her language, in mercy to kill her, and deliver her out of the sorrow she was in. Her speech was a kind of corrupt Latin, but she was ways understood by it. When the constable was

^a Abundance.

satisfied with his search, he brought th
woman to land. She kneeleth down, and
God's munificence; but what she was
tell no one, neither for foul nor fair, eve
she should die for her silence.

She said she was so mazèd in the sea,
That she forgot her minde, by her truth.
The constable hath of her so great pity,
And eke his wife, that they weepén for
She was so diligent, withouten sloth,
To serve and pleasen every in that place.
That all her love that looken in her face.

The constable and Dame Hermegild, his
pagans, as were the people of that cou
rally.

But Hermegild loved Cústance as her lif
And Cústance hath so long sojournèd th
In orisons, with many a bitter tear,
Till Jesu hath converted, through his gr
Dame Hermegild, constábless of that pl

In all that land no Christians durst asser
Christian people have fled from the count
fear of the pagans, that

conquerden all about
The plagès^v of the North by land and se
To Walès fled the Christianity
Of olde Britons, dwelling in this isle.
There was their refuge for the meane w

But yet the Christian Britons were no
pletely exiled but that there were som
vately honoured Christ, and beguiled heat
[from their errors]; and near the ca
dwelled three such.

^v Regions.

One of them was blind, and might not see,
But it were with thilk eyen of his mind,
With which men mowen see when they be blind.

Bright was the sun as in that summer's day,
For which the constable and his wife also,
And Cústance, have ytake the righte way
Toward the sea, a furlong way or two,
To playen, and to roamen to and fro;
And, in their walk this blinde man they met,
Crooked and old, with eyen fast yshet.

"In the name of Christ," cried this blind Britón,
"Dame Hermegild, give me my sight again."
This lady wax'd afraid of that soun,
Lest that her husband, shortly for to sain,
Would her for Jesu Christe's love have slain,
Till Cústance made her bold, and bade her worche"
The will of Christ, as daughter of holy church.

The constable wax'd abashed * of that sight,
And saide, "What amounteth all this fare?"
Custance answer'd, "Sir, it is Christe's might
That helpeth folk out of the fiendes snare."
And so far-forth she 'gan our law declare,
That she the constable, ere that it were eve,
Converted, and on Christ made him believe.

The constable was not lord of the fort where he
found Custance, but kept it strongly many a win-
ter's space, under Alla, king of Northumberland,
who was full wise and bold, and able of his hand
against the Scots, as men may well hear.

Satan, that ever waiteth to beguile us, saw all
the perfection of Custance, and began to consider
how he might requite her; and he made a young
knight that dwelt in the town love her so ardently,

* Work.

* Astonished, or ashamed.

† Behaviour.

with an impure affection, that he verily thought he should die unless he could induce her to listen to him.

He wooeth her, but it availeth nought ;
She woulde do no sinne by no way ;
And for despite, he compassèd his thought
To maken her a shameful death to dey. ^a
He waiteth when the constable is away,
And privily upon a night he crept
In Hermegildes chamber while she slept.

Weary, for-wakèd ^b in her orisons,
Sleepeth Custance, and Hermegild also.
This knight, through Sathanas' temptations,
All softly is to the bed ygo,
And cut the throat of Hermegild a-two,
And laid the bloody knife by Dame Custance,
And went his way—there God give him mischance !

Soon after, the constable cometh home again with Alla, the king of that country, and saw his wife ruthlessly slain, for which he often wept, and wrung his hands ; and in the bed by Dame Custance, he found the bloody knife.

Alas ! what might she say ?
For very woe her wit was all away.

King Alla was told the circumstances of this misfortune, and of the time, and where, and in what manner Custance was found in the ship, as ye have before heard me describe. Pity began to arise in the king's heart, when he saw so benign a creature fallen into such an unhappy condition.

For as the lamb toward his death is brought,
So stands this innocent before the king.

^a Die.

^b For, or through her wakefulness in her orisons.

This false knight, that hath this treason wrought,
 Beareth her in hand that she hath done this thing.
 But nathèless there was great murmuring
 Among the people, and say^e they cannot guess
 That she had done so great a wickedness ;

For they have seen her ever so virtuous,
 And loving Hermegild right as her life.
 Of this bare witness every in that house,
 Save he that Hermegild slew with his knife.

The gentle king hath caught a great motive on the
 art of this witness, and he thought he would in-
 quire deeper into the case in order to learn the
 truth. Alas ! Custance, thou hast no champion,
 or canst thou thyself fight. So woe the day ! un-
 less He that died for our redemption, and that
 bound Satan even there where he yet lies, be now
 my strong champion ; for unless Christ make known
 upon thee some miracle, without guilt shalt thou
 be slain as guilty. She set herself down on her
 knees, and said, " Immortal God, that savedest
 Susanna from false blame, and thou merciful maid,
 Mary, I mean daughter to Saint Anne, before
 whose child angels sing Hosannah ! if I be guilt-
 less of this felony, succour me, or else I shall die."

Have ye not seen some time a pale face
 (Among a press^d) of him that hath been lad
 Toward his death, where as he getteth no grace,
 And such a colour in his face hath had,
 Men mighten know him that was so bestad^e
 Amongè all the faces in that rout :^f
 So stands Custance, and looked her about.

Other queens living in prosperity, duchesses, and ye
 ladies every one, have some pity on her adversity.

And *who say.* ^d Crowd. • Beset. ^f Company.

"Madame," quoth he, "ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanken God a hundred thousand sithe;^s
My lady queen hath child, withouten doubt,
To joy and bliss of all this regne^h about.

Lo, here the letter sealèd of this thing,
That I must bear in all the haste I may.
If ye will ought unto your son the king,
I am your servant bothe night and day."
Donegild answered "As now at this time—Nay,
But here I will all night thou take thy rest,
To-morrow will I say thee what me lest."ⁱ

This messenger drank sadly; ale and wine;
And stolen were his letters privily
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine.
And counterfeited was full subtly
Another letter, wrought full sinfully,
Unto the king, direct of this mattére
From his constable, as ye shall after hear.

This letter spake,—The queen delivered was
Of so horrible a fiend-like créature,
That in the castle none so hardy was,
That any while durst therein endure.
The mother was an elf by adventure
Ycome, by charmès or by sorcery;
And every man hateth her company.

Woe was this king when he this letter had seen,
But to no wight he told his sorrows sore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again;
"Welcome the sonde^k of Christ for evermore
To me, that am now learned in his lore!
Lord, welcome be thy lust^l and thy pleasáncé;
My lust I put all in thine ordinance.

Keepeth this child, all be it foul or fair,
And eke my wife, unto mine home comíng:

^s Times.^h Realm.ⁱ Me lest—pleases me.^j Steadily, pertinaciously.^k Gift.^l Desire.

Christ when he list may senden me an heir
 More agreable than this to my liking."
 This letter he sealed, privily weeping,

which was soon taken to the messenger, and he goes
 forth.

O Messenger, full of drunkenness! Strong is
 thy breath, thy limbs are ever faltering, and thou
 betrayest all secrets. Thy mind is lost; thou
 anglest as a jay; thy face is changed. Where
 drunkenness prevaieth in any company, there,
 without doubt, no counsel can be hid. O Done-
 gild, I have no English worthy of thy malice and
 thy tyranny; and therefore I resign thee to the
 fiend: let him indite thy treason. Fie, mannish
 spirit, fie!

Oh, nay, by God, I lie.
 Fie, *fiendlike* Spirit, for I dare well tell,
 Though thou here walk, thy spirit is in hell.

This messenger cometh from the king again, and
 delights at the court of the king's mother; and
 she was very glad, and strove to please him in
 all possible ways. He drank, and well filled out
 his girdle. He sleepeth and he snoreth in his
 usual manner all night, and until the sunrise.
 Again were every one of his letters stolen, and
 others counterfeited in this manner:—The king
 commanded his constable, that on penalty of hang-
 ing and high judgment, he should not suffer Cus-
 tance under any circumstances to abide within his
 kingdom three days and the quarter of a tide.

But in the samè ship as he her found
 Her and her *younge son*, and all her gear,
 He *shoulde put*, and crowd her from the lond,

And charge her that she never eft^m come there.
 O my Custance! well may thy ghostⁿ have fear,
 And sleeping in thy dream, be in penance,
 When Donegild cast all this ordinance.

When the messenger awoke on the morrow he
 took the nearest way unto the castle hold, and gave
 the constable the letter, who, when he saw it, cried
 "Alas! and woe the day!

Lord Christ," quoth he, "how may this world
 endure,
 So full of sin is many a creature.

Oh mighty God, if that it be thy will, since thou
 art a rightful Judge, how may it be that innocence
 is suffered to perish, and wicked people to reign in
 prosperity. Ah, good Custance, alas! woe is me,
 that I must be thy tormentor or die a shameful
 death: there is no other way."

Weepen both young and old in all that place
 When that the king this cursèd letter sent;
 And Cústance, with a deadly palè face,
 The fourthe day toward the ship she went;
 But nathèless she taketh in good intent,
 The will of Christ, and kneeling on the strond,
 She saide, "Lord, aye welcome be thy sond."^o

He that me kepte from the falsè blame,
 While I was in the land amongès you,
 He can me keep from harm and eke from shame
 In the salt sea, although I see not how;
 As strong as ever he was, he is yet now;
 In him trust I, and in his mother dear,
 That is to me my sail, and eke my steer.^p

Her little child lay weeping in her arm;
 And kneeling piteously, to him she said,
 "Peace, little son, I will do thee no harm:"

^m Again. ⁿ Spirit. ^o Gift, or bidding. ^p Pilot, guide.



With that, her coverchief off her head she braid,^p
 And over his little eyen she it laid,
 And in her arms she lulleth it full fast,
 And into the heaven her eyen up she cast.

"Mother," quoth she, "and maiden bright, Mary,
 true it is that through woman's incitement man-
 kind was lost, and condemned for ever to death,
 for which thy child was rent on a cross. Thy
 blissful eyes saw all his torment; then is there no
 comparison between thy woe and any woe that
 man may sustain. Thou sawest thy child slain
 before thine eyes, and yet, by my faith, my little
 child lives:

Now, lady bright! to whom all woful cry,
 Thou glory of womanhood, thou faire May!
 Thou haven of refuge, bright star of day!
 Rue on my child, that of thy gentleness
 Ruest on every rueful in distress.

O little child, alas! what is thy guilt?
 That never wroughtest sin as yet, pardie;
 Why will thine harde father have thee spilt?^q
 O mercy, deare constable (quoth she),
 As let my little child dwell here with thee;
 And if thou dar'st not saven him from blame,
 So kiss him onès in his father's name."

Therewith she looketh backward to the land
 And saide, "Farewell, husband, ruthèless;"
 And up she rose, and walketh down the strand
 Toward the ship; her followeth all the press:^r
 And ever she prayeth her child to hold his peace,
 And taketh her leave, and with a holy intent
 She blesseth her, and into the ship she went.

The ship was victualled for her, it is no fear,
abundantly, for a long space; and of other necessa-

^p Took.

^q Put to death.

^r Crowd.

ies that she might need, she had enough, praised
e the grace of God. For wind and weather Al-
mighty God provide, and bring her home :

I can no better say,
But in the sea she driveth forth her way.

Alla the king cometh home soon after this
Unto his castle, of the which I told,
And asketh where his wife and his child is ;
The constable 'gan about his heart cold,
And plainly all the matter he him told
As ye have heard, I can tell it no better,
And show'd the king his seale and his letter.

And saide, " Lord, as ye commanded me,
Up' pain of death, so have I done certain."

'he messenger was tortured until he must know
nd tell plainly and fully in what place from night
o night he had lain ;

And thus by wit and subtle énquiring
Imagin'd was by whom this harm 'gan spring.

The hand was knowen that the letter wrote,
And all the venom of this cursèd deed.

but in what manner certainly I know not. The
fect is this, without doubt, that Alla slew his
mother, that men might plainly understand she
as a traitor to her allegiance: this was the un-
appy end of old Donegild. The sorrow that
lla night and day maketh for his wife and child
ay be told by no tongue. I will now again turn
o Custance, who floateth in the sea, in pain and
orrow, five years and more, as it pleased Christ's
ill, before her ship approached the land. At
st, under a heathen castle (of which I find not
e name in my text) Custance and her child are
st up by *the sea*. Almighty God, that saved all

mankind, have some remembrance of Custance and her child, that are fallen presently into heathen hands, and are on the point of destruction.

Down from the castle there cometh many a wight to gaze on this ship and on Custance; and shortly on a night from the castle the lord's steward (God give him misfortune)—a thief that had renounced our creed, came into the ship alone, and offered violence to her.

Woe was this wretched woman then begon;
Her childe cried, and she cried piteously;
But blissful Mary help'd her right anon,
For with her struggling well and mightily
The thief fell overboard all suddenly,
And in the sea he drowned for vengeance;
And thus hath Christ unwemmed^a kept Custance.

O, foule lust of luxury, lo, thine end!

Not only dost thou make man's mind faint, but verily thou ruigest his body. The end of thy work, as of thy blind lusts, is complaining. How many men find that, not for the sin committed, but for their intent to do this sin, they are either ruined or slain! And how may this weak woman have the strength to defend herself against this renegade?

O Goliath, immeasurable of length,
How mighte David maken thee so mate,^c
So young, and of armóur so desolate,
How durst he look upon thy dreadful face?
Well may men see it was but Goddès grace.

Who gave Judith courage or hardihood to slay Holofernes in his tent, and to deliver out of

^a Unspotted.

^c So suddenly stricken dead.

wretchedness the people of God? I say that even
 s God a

spirit of vigour sent

To them, and savèd them out of mischance,^a
 So sent he might and vigour to Custance.

Forth go'th her ship throughout the narrow mouth
 Of Gibraltar and Ceuta, driving alway,
 Sometime west, and sometime north and south,
 And sometime east, full many a weary day,
 Till Christè's mother (blessed be she, aye!)
 Hath shapen through her endless goodness
 To make an end of all her heaviness.

Now let us leave Custance for a short time, and
 speak we of the Roman emperor. By letters from
 Syria he hath learned the slaughter of the Christian
 people, and the dishonour done to his daughter by
 false traitor—I mean the wicked cursed Sultanness,
 who had caused little and great to be all slain at
 the feast. The emperor in consequence hath sent
 a senator in a royal manner, and of other lords
 God knows many a one, to take high vengeance
 upon the Syrians. They burn, slay, and bring to
 misfortune for a long time, but in the end they ad-
 dress themselves to their return homeward. And
 this victorious senator repaireth to Rome, sail-
 ing full royally, he met, as the story relates, the
 ship driving along,

In which Custance sitteth full piteously :
 Nothing ne knew he what she was, ne why
 She was in such array, ne will she say
 Of her estate, though that she shoulde dey.^v

He bringeth her to Rome ; and to his wife

^a *Misfortune, evil.*

^v *Die.*

“ Whose is that faire child that standeth yonder ? ”
 “ I n’ot,”^z quoth he, “ by God and by Saint John ;
 A mother he hath, but father hath he none,
 That I of wot : ”

but briefly, in a short space of time, he told Alla how that the child had been found.

“ But God wot,” quoth this senator also,
 “ So virtuous a liver in all my life
 Ne saw I never as she ;

nor have I ever heard more of worldly woman, whether maiden, wife, or widow. I dare well say she had rather a knife were driven through her breast than become a wicked woman. There is no man could bring her to that point.” Now this child was as like unto Custance as it was possible for a creature to be, and Alla, having her face in memory, mused thereon, if that the child’s mother could be she who had been his wife. Privily he sighed, and hurried from the table.

“ Parfay,” thought he, “ phantom is in my head,
 I ought to deem of skilful judgèment,
 That in the salte sea my wife is dead.”

And afterwards he argued with himself—“ How know I but that Christ have sent hither my wife by sea, as well as he sent her to my country, from whence she departed ? ”

And after noon he went home with the Senator to see if this wonder had happened. The Senator paid him great honour.

And hastily he sent after Custance ;
 But trusteth well her luste not to dance :
 When that she wiste wherefore was that sond ;^a
 Unneth^b upon her feet she mighte stond.

^z Know not.

^a Message.

^b Hardly.

When Alla saw his wife, fair he her gret,^a
 And wept, that it was ruth for to see;
 For at the firste look he on her set
 He knew well verily that it was she.
 And she for sorrow as dumb stood as a tree:
 So was her hearte shut in her distress,
 When she remember'd his unkindness.

Twice she swooneth in his owen sight;
 He weepeth and him excometh piteously:
 "Now God," quoth he, "and all his hallow^d bright,
 So wisely on my soul as have mercy,
 That of your harm as guiltless am I
 As is Maurice my son, so like your face;
 Elys the fend me fetch out of this place."

Long was the sobbing and the bitter pain
 Ere that their woful heartes mighten cease,
 Great was the pity for to hear them plain,
 Through whiche plaints gan their woe increase.
 I pray you all my labour to release,
 I may not tell their woe until to-morrow,
 I am so weary for to speak of sorrow.

But finally, when the truth is known that Alla was
 guiltless of her woe—

I trow a hundred times have they kissed,
 And such a bliss is there betwixt them two,
 That save the joy that lasteth ever mo',
 There is none like that any creature
 Hath seen or shall, while that the world may 'dure.

Then prayed she her husband meekly, in order
 to relieve the long pining of her heart, that he
 would beg her father specially to vouchsafe of his
 majesty some day to dine with them; she prayed
 him also to say nothing to him of herself. Some
 men would say that the child Maurice doth this mes-

^a Greeted.

^d Holiness.

sage unto the emperor, but, as I guess, Alla was not so unwise as to send a child only to him who is the sovereign of honour and the flower of all Christendom; it is better to believe he went also himself. The emperor kindly granted the request to come to dinner:—

And well rede I he lookèd busily
Upon this child, and on his daughter thought.

Alla goes to his lodging, and, as he should, arrays everything for the feast to the best of his ability. The morrow came, and Alla and his wife prepared to meet the emperor, and in joy and gladness they rode forth, and when she saw her father in the street, she alighted hastily, and falleth before him.

“Father,” quoth she, “your younge child, Custance,
Is now full clean out of your rémembrance.

I am your daughter, your Custance,” quoth she;
“That whilom ye have sent into Surrie;”
It am I, father, that in the salte sea,
Was put alone, and damned¹ for to die:
Now, goode father, I you mercy cry;
Send me no more into none heathenese,
But thanketh my lord here of his kindenesse.”

Who can the piteous joye tellen all
Betwixt them three since they been thus ymet?

But I shall make an end of my tale: the day goeth fast, I will no longer delay. These glad folk being seated at dinner, I leave them to dwell in joy and bliss a thousand times greater than I can tell of. The child Maurice was afterwards made emperor by the pope, and lived like a Christian, doing great

¹ Syria.

² Continued.

honour to Christ's church. But I let his story pass by; my tale refers to Custance. In the old Roman gestes men may find his life. I bear it not in mind.

This King Alla, when he saw the fitting time, returns with his sweet and holy wife to England the nearest way, and there lives in joy and quiet. Although it lasted but a little while.

Joy of this world for time will not abide;
From day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who ever lived in such delight for a day, that he stirred neither conscience, nor ire, nor affection, nor some quarrel of kindred, nor envy, nor pride, nor passion, nor offence? I say this only for this end—that but a little while lasts the bliss of Alla and Custance,

For Death, that taketh of high and low his rent, took Alla out of this world when a year had passed, and Custance hath great sorrow for him. Now let us pray to God to bless his soul. Finally, Custance goeth back to Rome, all her adventures over, where she finds her friends alive and in health. And when she has found her father, she falleth on her knees to the ground, and

Weeping for tenderness in hearte blithe,
she thanketh God a hundred thousand times. In virtue and deeds of holy charity they all live, and are never again divided until death parts them. This is the life they lead. Farewell, my tale is at an end. Now Jesus Christ, that of his might may send joy after woe, govern us in his grace, and keep us all in safety.

REMARKS ON THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

THERE is in the British Museum a very ancient manuscript containing, under the name of Emare, the story, in effect, of Custance; and of which story the author, at the end of his rhymes, tells us,

This is one of Bretagne lays
That was used by old days.

From this Bretagne lay, then, in all probability, did both Gower and Chaucer take the same subject for their respective works, the '*Confessio Amantis*' and the 'Canterbury Tales.' Tyrwhitt indeed supposes that the greater poet borrowed from the lesser one, on account of the similarity of the chief features of the story in both authors, and because he finds the Man of Law remarking in Chaucer's version,

Some men would say how that the child Maurice
Doth this messáge unto this emperor;

now Gower sends Maurice unto the emperor, he is therefore one of the "some men." But this is hardly the way in which Chaucer would refer to his intimate friend; and we must conclude that there were other men, or other men's writings, much more likely to be referred to, when we find that at the same time that the two English poets were adapting the story for English readers, an Italian novelist was doing the same for readers of his own country. The Bretagne lay, which belonged to a class of compositions that received great attention in Chaucer's time, was in all probability the common source to which Chaucer, Gower, and Ser Giovanni resorted for materials. At all events it is clear, though the fact has been oddly overlooked, that as

Gower did not originate the story, wherever he went, there Chaucer could go too.

And if Chaucer did, in point of time, follow Gower in this story, and re-write what the latter had already written, we cannot be too thankful for the just estimation of his predecessor's labours, that he thus practically exhibited. We have only to take up the first specimen that comes to hand of the productions of the "Moral Gower," as Chaucer called him, to see how necessary it was that such a character and story as those of Custance should be inspired by that diviner breath of poesy which the one knew so well how to give them, but of which the other was completely destitute. And we may here observe, that it is not our purpose to lengthen out the Remarks appended to each of the Tales in this Series, by calling attention to particular passages of excellence, except in those cases where we have some special and important object in view, as in the 'Remarks to the Knight's Tale.' We have none such at present. Gower is not Dryden—has none of Dryden's fame; Chaucer can gain nothing by the most favourable contrasts with him. It has been observed, "his narrative is often quite petrifying;" and one can easily judge that this is no exaggeration when we know that Gower actually accomplished the feat of turning Ovid into an annalist.

There are, however, two or three features of the 'Man of Law's Tale' that demand a few passing words. The first is the very dramatic manner in which the character of the relater—the Man of Law—is preserved in the style of the narrative. It is impossible for a moment to forget the traits Chaucer has ascribed to him,

*Discreet he was, and of great reverence—
He seemed such—his wordès were so wise.*

Accordingly, nothing can be more pompous within the bounds of poetical propriety than the style of his language, or the whole tenor of his reflections, and of which the first verse strikes, as it were, the key-note—

Oh scathful harm, condition of povért' !
With thirst, with cold, with hunger, so confounded ;
To asken help thee shameth in thine heart ; &c.

nothing more professional than his desire to be correct, and to state both sides of the question, even in such trifling questions as,—*how* Maurice went to the Emperor alone, or in company with his father,

Some men would say, &c.

Nothing more judge-like, and altogether characteristic, than his readiness to express his condemnation of error, and his virtuous indignation against all evil doers. Has the Emperor of Rome forgotten to consult the astrologers, when he is about to send forth his daughter on her voyage, the Man of Law pauses to ask

Imprudent Emperor of Rome, alas !
Was there no philosopher in all thy town ?

Is the Sultanness about to commit all sorts of wickedness—she shall not at all events do it, even in fiction, without the Man of Law's hurling his anathemas at her head :

O Sultanness, root of iniquity,
Virago thou—Semiramis the Second, &c.

Does the messenger get drunk, the Man of Law takes care that every one who listens to the tale shall tremble for the consequences of that vice, by *gazing* on the picture he paints of the messenger, *fulfilled of drunkenness*. Does the lord's steward *offer violence* to the lonely and miserable Custance, *we are not only* informed that he is a thief that had

renounced our creed, and that he was drowned, but we have also the moral carefully pointed for us—

O foule lust of luxury, lo, thine end!

Chaucer, like Homer, must have his occasional nod, it seems. And at such a time, we presume, he overlooked the awkwardness that is felt on reading the tale, from the similarity in sex, position, character, and influence of its chief moving agents. It is the mother of the Sultan who puts all the Christians to death at Custance's marriage feast, and sends her forth to float for days and years on the sea; it is the mother of King Alla, who, during that monarch's absence, re-commits poor Custance to the element from which she had before escaped so marvellously.

And Custance—what a character is hers! We might believe she was an angel for her patience, benignity, heroism, and faith, but that we see and feel too deeply how thoroughly she was the woman, in her retiring *sensitiveness* to the wrongs that come, or appear to come, by the hands of those she loves best, and in the tenacity and silence with which they are brooded over. We do learn somewhat of her feelings when the first wrong is done her, because she has reason to believe that no wrong is intended; so while she obeys her parents, and will go to the barbarous nation, she allows the reflection to be wrung from her,

Women are born to thralldom and penance,
And to be under mannès governance.

But when the consequences of her parents' act become fully known to her, as she waits for her death upon the wild waves, she has no longer words to speak—*her lips are mute thenceforward*—she can *but feel the anguish at her heart*. She is driven *ashore upon the rocks of Northumbria, and th*

constable and his wife relieve her from all further fear of death ; still not even their kindness can win her to disclose the sad story. As the poet says,

But what she was she woulde no man say,
For foul or fair, though that she shoulde dey.

So again with the next great and still more terrible era of her life. For the first time her heart has expanded towards a lover in the person of her husband, Alla ; the joys of the mother have been added to those of the wife :—she is in the enjoyment of the highest bliss that humanity may well know ; when suddenly she is again on the shores of the dreadful sea, lulling her child to keep it from crying, the vessel—untenanted until she enter it—rocketh before her, the waves roaring and dashing about her feet, as though eager for her destruction. And it is her *husband*, she thinks, who has commanded all this ; yet her only words are

—————Farewell, husband, ruthelless,

and she enters the ship, praying the child ever to hold his peace.

Again she is redeemed from the jaws of the terrible deep, but she is silent to the Senator, her deliverer ; she would die rather than speak what she has to say. An ordinary observer might think all this while she felt little ; but mark, when she does again meet with Alla, how all that has been passing within her is revealed—how the woman, the tender, confiding, but as she believes cruelly trampled on woman, becomes apparent. At the first look Alla knew her ; and as to Custance,

—*she for sorrow as dumb stood as a tree :*
So was her hearte shut in her distress,
When she remember'd his unkindeness.

But she soon learns her error—and then indeed it is happy, happy Custance.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

household a lusty bachelor, who as he one day came riding from the river [where he had been hawking for water-fowl], saw a maiden walking before him, and grossly ill-treated her. For this oppression so great a clamour arose, and such earnest appeals were made unto the king, that the knight was condemned to death by course of law, and would have lost his head (such perhaps was then the statute), but that the queen and other ladies prayed so long unto the king for pardon, that he granted him his life for the time, and he gave him to the queen to be entirely at her will to save him or to put him to death as she might choose. The queen thanketh the king with all her heart, and afterwards thus speaks to the knight,

When that she saw her time upon a day :

“Thou standest yet,” quoth she, “in such a position that thou hast no surety for thy life.” But

“I grant thee life, if thou canst tellen me
 What thing is it that women most desiren :
 Beware, and keep thy necke-bone from iron.
 And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
 Yet will I give thee leavè for to gone^s
 A twelvemonth and a day to seek and lere^h
 An answer suffisant in this mattére ;
 And surety will I have, ere that thou pace,
 Thy body for to yelden in this place.”

The knight was sad, and he sighed sorrowfully. But what? He may not do just what he pleaseth. And at last he chose to go, and return at the year's end with such answer as God would provide for him. He takes his leave, and goes forth on his way.

^s Go.

^h Learn.



He seeketh every house and every place
 Where as he hopeth for to finden grace,
 To learnen what thing women loven most;
 But he ne could arriven in no cost
 Where as he mighte find in this mattère
 Two créatures according in fere.¹
 Some saiden women loven best richés,
 Some saiden honour, some saiden jolliness,
 Some rich array;

some sensual pleasures,

And oft time to be widow, and to be wed.

Some said that we be most contented in heart when
 we be flattered and praised; and—I will not lie—
 he goes near the truth.

A man shall win us best with flattery;
 And with attendance and with business
 Be we ylimed, bothe more and less.
 And some men saiden that we loven best
 For to be free, and do right as us lest;^k
 And that no man reprove us of our vice,
 But say that we be wise and nothing nice.^l

But in truth there are none of us all that will not
 resent it, if a wight attack us on a sore point—and
 especially because he speaks truly of us:

Assay, and he shall find it that so doth;

for be we never so vicious within, we must be held
 to be wise and virtuous. And some said that we
 have great delight to be considered stable and also
 secret, and to dwell steadfastly in one purpose, and
 as not betraying matters that men have told to us.

¹ According in fere—agreeing together.

^j That is to say, great and little, or rich and poor.

^k Please.

^l Foolish or silly.

But that tale is not worth the handle of a rake.
 Pardie, we women can conceal nothing, as witness
 Midas. Will ye hear the tale?—

Ovid, amongès other thingès small,
 Said, Midas had under his longe hairs,
 Growing upon his head, two ass's ears ;
 The which evice he hid, as he best might,
 Full subtilly from every mannès sight,
 That, save his wife, there wist of it no mo' ;
 He lov'd her most, and trusted her alsó ;
 He prayèd her that to no creäture
 She n' oulde tellen of his disfigure.
 She swore him Nay, for all the world to win
 She n' oulde do that villainy nor sin,
 To make her husband have so foul a name :
 She would not tell it for her owen shame.
 But nathèless her thoughte that she died
 That she so longe should a counsel hide ;
 Her thought it swell so sore about her heart,
 That needèly some word her must astart ;^m
 And since she durst not tell it to no man, ;
 Down to a maraisⁿ faste by she ran,
 Till she came there her hearte was afire ;
 And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
 She laid her mouth unto the water down.
 " Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun,"
 Quoth she, " to thee I tell it, and no mo',
 My husband hath long ass's earès two.
 Now is my heart all whole, now is it out,
 I might no longer keep it out of doubt."
 Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
 Yet out it must ; we can no counsel hide.

If ye would hear the remnant of the tale, read
 Ovid, and there ye may learn it. The knight to
 whom my tale especially refers, when he saw that
 he might not thus arrive at the knowledge of what

^m *Let escape,*

ⁿ *Marsh.*

women love most, was very sorrowful in his spirit. But home he goeth—he may not tarry, for the day has arrived that he must turn homewards.

And in his way it happen'd him to ride,
In all his care, under a forest side;
Whereas he saw upon a dancè go
Of ladies four and twenty, and yet mo'.^o
Toward this ilke dance he drew full yern,^p
In hope that he some wisdom shoulde learn;
But certainly ere he came fully there
Yvanish'd was this dance he wist not where;

and he saw no creature bearing life, except that on the green he beheld an old woman sitting—

A fouler wight there may no man devise.

She arose and approached the knight, saying,
“Sir knight, there lieth no way in this direction.
Tell me, on your faith, what ye seek. Perchance

it may the better be:

These olde folk con^a muchel thing,” quoth she.

“My dear mother,” quoth this knight, “certainly I am but dead unless I say what thing it is that women desire most: could ye teach me I would requite well your hire.”

“Plight me thy truth here in my hand,” quoth she,

“The nexte thing that I require of thee,

Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,

And I will tell it you ere it be night.”

“Have here my truthe,” quoth the knight, “I grant.”

“Thenne,” quoth she, “I dare me well avaunt,”

^o More.

^p Eagerly.

^a Know, or can do—much, &c. The frequent use of this word in this sense shows that our ancestors were most thoroughly and practically aware that knowledge is power.

^r Assert in a confident manner.



Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,
 Upon my life the queen will say as I.
 Let see which is the proudest of them all,
 That weareth on a kerchief or a caul,
 That dare say nay of that I shall you teach.
 Let us go forth withouten longer speech."

Then whispered she a short lesson in his ear, and bade him to be glad and fearless.

When they arrived at the court, the knight said he had kept his day, as he had promised, and was ready with his answer.

Full many a noble wife, and many a maid,
 And many a widow (for that they be wise),
 The queen herself sitting as a justice
 Assembled be, his answer for to hear;
 And afterward this knight was bid appear.

To every wight commanded was silence,
 And that the knight should tell in audience
 What thing that worldly women loven best.
 This knight ne stood not still as doth a beast,
 But to this question anon answer'd
 With manly voice, that all the court it heard:
 "My liegè lady, generally," quoth he,
 "Women desiren to have sovereignty,
 As well over their husband as their love,
 And for to be in mast'ry him above.
 This is your most desire, though ye me kill;
 Do as you list, I am here at your will."

In all the court there was neither maid, wife, nor widow that opposed what he said, but all declared that he was worthy to have his life:

And with that word up start this olde wife^t
 Which that the knight saw sitting on the green.
 "Mercy," quoth she, "my sovereign lady queen,

^t Lover.

^t Woman.

Ere that your court départ, as do me right.
 I taught this answer unto this knight,
 For which he plighted me his truthe there,
 The firste thing I would of him requere
 He would it do, if it lay in his might.
 Before this court then pray I thee, Sir knight,"
 Quoth she, "that thou me take unto thy wife;
 For well thou wott'st that I have kept thy life:
 If I say false, say nay upon thy fay."

This knight answered, "Alas! and wala wa!
 I wot right well that such was my behest;
 For Goddès love as choose a new request:
 Take all my goods, and let my body go."

"Nay then," quoth she, "I shrew" us bothe two;
 For though that I be olde, foul, and poor,
 I n' ould for all the metal nor the ore
 That under earth is grave, or lieth above,
 But if thy wife I were, and eke thy love."
 "My love!" quoth he; "nay, my damnation!
 Alas! that any of my nation
 Should ever so foully disparagèd be."
 But all for nought; the end is this, that he
 Constrained was, he needès must her wed;
 And take this olde wife.—

Now perchance some men would say, that from
 negligence I do not care to tell you the joy and
 the array of the feast on the day of marriage, but
 I shall answer shortly that

—there was no joy ne feast at all,
 There n' as but heaviness and muchel sorrow;
 For privily he wedded her on the morrow,
 And all day after hid him as an owl,
 So woe was him, his wife lookèd so foul.

But this old wife evermore smiled upon him, and
 said,

He is not gentle, be he duke or earl,
For villain's sinful deedès make a churl.

Gentility is but the renown of thine ancestors for their high goodness, and belongs not to thy person. Thy gentility cometh from God alone; thence cometh the very gentleness of grace. It is not bequeathed to us with our position. Think how noble, as Valerius saith, was that Tullus Hostilius who rose out of poverty to high rank. Read Seneca, and read also Boethius; there shall ye see it expressed, that, beyond doubt,—

He is gentle that doth gentle deeds.

And therefore, dear husband, I conclude thus: although mine ancestors were rude—

Yet may the highe God (and so hope I)
Granten me grace to liven virtuously;
Then am I gentle when that I begin
To liven virtuously and waiven sin.

And whereas ye refuse me for my poverty, the high God, on whom we believe, chose to lead his life in wilful poverty. And certes every man, maiden, or wife, may understand that Jesus, the king of heaven, would not choose a vicious living.

Glad poverty is certainly an honest thing, as Seneca and other learned writers tell us:—Whoso is satisfied with his poverty

I hold him rich, all had he not a shirt.

He that coveteth is a poor wight, for he would have that which is not within his power.

But he that nought hath, ne coveteth to have,
Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.^b

True poverty is a proper sin,

^b Servant—poor man.

Juvenal saith of povert' merrily,
 The poore man when he go'th by the way,
 Before the thievès he may sing and play.
 Povért' is hateful good ; and, as I guess,
 A full great bringer out of business.

A great amender also of wisdom to him that
 maketh it in patience. Poverty is this, however
 range it seem, a possession that no man will
 challenge.

Povért' full often, when a man is low,
 Maketh his God, and eke himself to know :
 Povért' a spectacle is, as thinketh me,
 Through which he may his very^b friendès see.

and therefore, sir, since that I grieve you not,
 approve me no more for my poverty.

And now, sir, ye reprove me for my age. Cer-
 tainly, sir, though no authority were to be found
 in any book, ye gentlemen of honour say that men
 should reverence an old person, and, in your gen-
 erousness, call him father ; and yet authors shall I
 find, as I guess.

Now, whereas you say I am old and foul, then
 read ye not to be wronged as a husband ; for
 ugliness and age be great wardens upon chastity.
 But, nevertheless, since I know what delights you,
 shall fulfil your desires." "Choose now," quoth
 he, "one of these two things : to have me foul
 and old till that I die,—

And be to you a true humble wife,
 And never you displease in all my life ;
 Or ellès will ye have me young and fair,

^b Real, true.

And take your adventure of the repair
That shall be to your house, because of me ?

Choose now yourself whichever best pleases you.”
The knight considers, and sighs deeply, but at last
he said :—

“ My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
I put me in your wise governance ;
Chooseth yourself which may be most pleasance
And most honour to you and me also ;
I do no force^c the whether of the two ;
For as you liketh, it sufficeth me.”
“ Then have I got the mastery,” quoth she,
“ Since I may choose and govern as me lest ? ”^d
“ Yea, certes, wife,” quoth he, “ I hold it best.”
“ Kiss me,” quoth she, “ we be no longer wroth,
For by my truth I will be to you *both* ;
This is to say, yea, bothe fair and good.
I pray to God that I may starven wood^e
But I to you be all so good and true,
As e’er was wife since that the world was new ;
And but I be to-morrow as fair to seen
As any lady, emperess, or queen,
That is betwixt the east and eke the west,
Do with my life and death right as you lest.^d
Cast up the curtains, look how that it is.”
And when the knight saw verily all this,
That she so fair was, and so young thereto,
For joy he hent^f her in his armès two :
His heartè bathèd in a bath of bliss.

A thousand times he kissed her. And she obeyed
him in everything that might add to his pleasure
or his love. And thus they lived in perfect joy
unto their lives’ end.

^c I do not care.

^e Die mad.

^d Please.

^f Caught.

REMARKS ON THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

LOWER (in his 'Florent') and Chaucer have here again worked upon the same materials—whence derived we know not. Here, too, Dryden has continued the business of translating his illustrious redecessor with about the same amount of success; in the Knight's tale. One illustration—of a different nature than any given in the tale just mentioned—will suffice. The humour of the two poets shall furnish our present parallel. No one can have read without being charmed by the simple, unobtrusive, yet rich and overflowing humour of the story of Midas from Ovid in Chaucer; no one can have avoided something like a sense of pleasurable surprise to see how, even in such a story, the poetical power can suddenly raise everything it touches, as in the lines—

And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
She laid her mouth unto the water down, &c.

Well, here in contrast with Chaucer's we place Dryden's version of the same story; and we can assure our readers they will be well repaid for the trouble of comparing them line by line, if they have still a doubt as to the injury that the later poet has done the earlier by not merely enjoying the fame that properly belongs to Chaucer, but by dimming the brightness of the morning-star of our poetry by interposing between us and him the veil of his own less spiritual intellect.

CHAUCER's Tale of Midas :

Ovid—

Said, Midas had under his longe hairs
 Growing upon his head two ass's ears,
 The whiche vice he hid as he best might
 Full subtilly from every mannès sight,
 That save his wife there wist of it no mo' ;
 He lov'd her most, and trusted her also ;
 He prayèd her that to no creäture
 She n'ouldè tellen of his disfigure.

She swore him nay, for all the world to win,
 She n'oulde do that villainy or sin,
 To make her husband have so foul a name :
 She would not tell it for her owen shame.
 But nathèless her thoughte that she died
 That she so longe should a counsel hide ;
 Her thought it swell so sore about her heart
 That needèly some word her must astart ;
 And since she durst not tell it to no man,
 Down to a marais faste by she ran ;
 Till she came there her hearte was afire,
 And as a bittern bumbleth in the mire,
 She laid her mouth unto the water down :
 " Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun,"
 Quoth she ; " to thee I tell it, and no mo',
 My husband hath long ass's earès two :
 Now is my heart all whole now is it out ;
 I might no longer keep it out of doubt."

DRYDEN's Tale of Midas,

who,—

By Phœbus was endow'd with asses ears,
 Which under his long locks he well concealed
 (As monarchs' vices must not be reveal'd),

For fear the people have 'em in the wind,
Who long ago were neither dumb nor blind ;
Nor apt to think from Heaven their title springs,
Since Jove and Mars left off begetting kings :
This Midas knew ; and durst communicate
To none but to his wife his ears of state :
One must be trusted, and he thought her fit,
As passing prudent, and a parlous wit.
To this sagacious confessor he went,
And told her what a gift the gods had sent,
But told it under matrimonial seal,
With strict injunction never to reveal.
The secret heard, she plighted him her troth
(And sacred sure is every woman's oath),
The royal malady should rest unknown,
Both for her husband's honour and her own.
But ne'ertheless she pined with discontent ;
The counsel rumbled till it found a vent.
The thing she knew she was obliged to hide ;
By interest and by oath the wife was tied ;
But if she told it not, the woman died.
Loth to betray a husband and a prince,
But she must *burst or blab* ; and no pretence
Of honour tied her tongue from self-defence.
A marshy ground commodiously was near,
Thither she ran, and held her breath for fear,
Lest if a word she spoke of anything,
That word might be the secret of the king.
Thus full of counsel to the fen she went,
Grip'd all the way, and longing for a vent ;
Arrived, by pure necessity compelled,
On her *majestic marrow-bones* she kneel'd ;
Then to the water's brink she laid her head,
And as a bittern bumps within a reed,
"To thee alone, O lake," she said, "I tell
(And as thy queen, command thee to conceal),
Beneath his locks the King my husband wears
A goodly royal pair of asses ears ;

Now have I eased my bosom of the pain
Till the next longing fit return again."

After this, one need not to be surprised to find that the chief character of the wife of Bath's Tale is utterly ruined in Dryden's hands. Chaucer never for an instant forgets she is only wearing a mask of age and ugliness in order to obtain an extraordinary opportunity of purifying and elevating the knight's character by teaching him the hollowness of beauty without virtue, and of rank without desert. The poet is most careful, therefore, to preserve a perfect harmony between what she is beneath the mask and what she shall appear to be when the mask is thrown aside; namely, a beautiful, loving, pure, and lofty spirit. Every word she speaks impresses us with a respect for her, gradually rising into something like veneration. Of course, when the knight with such humorous pathos begs her—

Take all my goods and let my body go,

she is deaf to his request, because she knows—what he does not—that the time will come when he will reciprocate with equal earnestness the feelings she expresses towards him :—

I n'oulde for all the metal nor the ore
That under earth is grave,^s or lieth above,
But if thy wife I were, and eke thy love.

But imagine for a moment what would be Chaucer's sentiments if, with his object in the tale—his design as to the chief character,—he could live

^s Buried.

again just now, and find a brother poet attributing to the knight's bride such motives as are conveyed in the following lines :—

In vain he proffered all his goods to save
His body, destin'd to that living grave.
The licorish hag rejects the pelf with scorn,
And nothing but the man will serve her turn.

The combination of error and evil in these lines is so great as almost to defy analysis or exposure. It is undoing in a couplet all that Chaucer sought to do by the whole poem, which becomes in the process purposeless, incoherent, prosaic, absurd. The lady, for instance, has only to reveal herself in her true personal character before the court to ensure a cheerful husband at once, if that be her great object. Yet thus it is Dryden understood and translated the Wife of Bath's Tale, so charming alike in its purpose, machinery, and mode of execution. We know nothing more dramatic and playful than the surprise towards the close when we find how the knight's lesson as to what women most desire is brought home to him by his teacher, who, while pursuing higher and more evident objects, has obtained that too ; thereby giving the finishing touch to the story. Puzzled by the difficulties which the superior wisdom of his aged-looking bride has raised, the knight wisely consents to let the same wisdom resolve them. He says—

“ I put me in your wise governance.”

Then, says she,—

“ have I got the mastery,
Since I may choose and govern as me lest ?”^b
“ Yea, certes, wife,” quoth he, “ I hold it best.”

And whatever may be said on the different sides of that mighty question—matrimonial sovereignty,—we should certainly say that whenever a man finds he has got such a wife as the one here described, he cannot do better than imitate the policy of the knight, her husband.

^b Please.

THE FRIAR'S TALE.



THE FRIAR'S TALE.

THERE was once dwelling in my country an arch-
 on, a man of high rank, who punished with
 t boldness all kinds of libertinism and other
 s, such as witchcraft, defamation, adultery,
 onduct by churchwardens, violation of wills
 contracts, neglect of sacraments, also usury
 simony ; but libertines he made the most se-
 ly to suffer. They should certainly sing if
 were caught. Those, too, who paid insuf-
 nt tithes were shamefully ruined if any person
 ld complain of them ; no pecuniary infliction
 ht save them :—

For smalle tithes and small offering
He made the people piteously to sing ;
For ere the bishop hent * them with his crook,
They weren in the archdeacon's book ;
Then had he through his jurisdiction
Power to do on them correction.

He had a sumpnour ready to his hand,
A slier boy was none in Engeland.

secretly he had his spies, who taught him
re it might avail [to find offenders]. He could
spare a libertine or two to teach their practices

* Caught.

to a couple of dozen more. And though this sumpnour here^b be as mad as a hare, I will not spare to tell his ribaldry. For we are out of their correction. They have no jurisdiction over us, nor ever shall have as long as they live. This false thief, this sumpnour, had always vicious women—

ready to his hand
As any hawk, to lure in Engleland;
That told him all the secrets that they knew,
For their acquaintance was not come of new.

They were his private informers. He obtained for himself by their means a great profit. His master knew not always what he won. He would, without a mandate, summon an ignorant man, on

pain of Christè's curse,
And they were inly glad to fill his purse,
and make great feasts for him at the ale-house.

And right as Judas hadde purses small
And was a thief, right such a thief was he;
His master had but half his duety.

He was, to give him due praise, a thief, a sumpnour, and a pander.

And so befell, that onès on a day
This sumpnour waiting ever on his prey,
Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,^c
Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe,

^b Another of the Canterbury Pilgrims, between whom and the Friar there has been passing a smart skirmish of jibes and malice.

^c A musical instrument; remarkable probably, like the *fiddle*, for its inharmonious character when old and cracked. Farther on, we shall find the same aged dame called an old *rebeck*, that is, an old fiddle.



And happened that he saw before him ride
 A gay yeoman under a forest side ;
 A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen ;
 He had upon a courtepy^d of green,
 A hat upon his head with fringes black.

"Sir," quoth the sumpnour, "hail, and well
 o'ertake,"

"Welcome," quoth he, "and every good fellaw ;
 Whither ridest thou under this greene shaw ?"^e
 (Saide this yeoman) "Wilt thou far to-day ?"

This sumpnour him answer'd, and saide "Nay ;
 Here faste by (quoth he) is mine intent
 To riden, for to raisen up a rent
 That longeth to my lordès duety."

"Ah ! art thou then a bailiff ?" "Yea," quoth he,
 (He durste not for very filth and shame
 Say that he was a sumpnour, for the name.)

"*De par Dieux*," quoth this yeoman, "levè bro-
 ther,

Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.

I am unknownen as in this country ;
 Of thine acquaintance I will prayen thee,
 And eke of brotherhood, if that thee lest.^f

I have gold and silver lying in my chest ;
 If that thee hap to come in to our shire,
 All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire."

"*Grand-mercy*," quoth this sumpnour, "by my
 faith."

Each then layeth his hand in that of the other as a
 pledge of his truth that they will be sworn brethren
 until their death.

In dalliance they riden forth and play.
 This sumpnour, which that was as full of jangles,^g
 As full of venom be^h these variangles,ⁱ

^d Short cloak. ^e Wood. ^f Please.

^g Chattering. ^h As be.

ⁱ *Cotgrave* explains the variangle to be a small wood-
 pecker, black and white of colour, and but half as big as the

And ever enquiring upon every thing,—

"Brother," quoth he, "where is now your dwelling,

Another day if that I should you seech?"

"This yeoman him answer'd in softe speech,
"Brother," quoth he, "far in the north country,
Where, as I hope, sometime I shall thee see.
Ere we depart¹ I shall thee so well wiss,¹
That of mine house ne shalt thou never miss."

"Now, brother," quoth this sumpnour, "I you pray,

Teach me, while that we ride by the way,
(Since that ye be a bailiff, as am I)
Some subtlety; and tell me faithfully,
In mine office how I may moste win;
And spareth not for conscience or for sin,
But as my brother tell me how do ye?"

“ Now, by my truthe, brother mine,” said he,
 “ As I shall tellen thee a faithful tale,
 My wages be full strait,^m and eke full smale :
 My lord is hard to me and dangerous,ⁿ
 And mine office is full laborious,
 And therefore by extortion I live ;
 Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
 Algatès ° by sleighte or by violence
 From year to year I win all my dispense :
 I can no better tellen faithfully.”

“ Now, certes (quoth this sumpnour), so fare I,
I spare not to taken, God it wot,
But if it be too heavy or too hot.
What I may get in counsel privily
No manner conscience of that have I.

ordinary green one. Speght however supposes it to refer to the Butcher-bird.

^j Seek. ^k Depart [from each other]. ^l Direct.
 ^m Narrow.

▪ Difficult to please, and so, even in the modern sense, dangerous, as regards the consequences that may flow from his displeasure. • Always.

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him. I

"For we," quoth he, "will us such forme make,
As most is able our preye for to take."

"What maketh you to have all this labour?"

"Full many a causè, levè Sir Sumpnour,"
Saide this fiend. "But alle thing hath time;
The day is short, and it is passèd prime,
And yet ne won I nothing in this day;
I will intend to winning if I may,
And not intend our thingès to declare.
For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
To understand, although I told them thee.
But for thou askest why labouren we?
For sometime we be Goddès instruments,
And meanès to do his commandèments,
When that he list, upon his creätures,
In divers acts and in diverse figüres:
Withouten him we have no might certain,
If that he list to standen there again.*
And sometime, at our prayer, have we leave,
Only the body and not the soul to grieve;
Witness on Job, whom that we diden woe.

And sometime have we might on both the soul and
body, and sometime we are suffered to seek for
[unguarded points]

Upon a man, and do his soul unrest
And not his body, and all is for the best.
When he withstandeth our temptation
It is a cause of his salvation,
Albeit that it was not our intent
He should be safe, but that we would him hent.[†]
And sometime be we servants unto man,
As to the archëbishop Saint Dunstán,
And to the apostle, servant eke[‡] was I."
"Yet tell me," quoth this sumpnour, "faithfully,
Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
Of elements?" The fiend answerèd "Nay.

* *There-against.*

† *Catch, seize.*

‡ *Also.*

Sometime we feign, and sometimes we arise
 With deade bodies, in full sundry wise,
 And speak as reasonably, and fair, and well,
 As to the Pythoness did Samuel ;
 And yet will some men say it was not he :
 I do no force^v of your divinity.
 But one thing warn I thee ; I will not jape ;^w
 Thou wilt algates^x weet^y how we be shape :
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,
 Come where thee needeth not of me to lere ;^z
 For thou shalt, by thine own experience,
 Con, in a chair red, of this sentence
 Bet[ter] than Virgil, while he was on live ;
 Or Dant' also. Now let us riden blive,^a
 For I will holden company with thee
 Till it be so that thou forsakè me."

"Nay," quoth this sumpnour, "that shall ne'er
 betide,

I am a yeoman, knowen is full wide ;
 My truthe will I hold, as in this case ;
 For though thou were the devil Sathanas,
 My truthe will I hold to thee, my brother,
 As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
 For to be true brethren in this case,
 And both we go abouten our purcháse.
*Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give,
 And I shall mine, thus may we bothe live ;
 And if that any of us have more than other,
 Let him be true, and part it with his brother."*

"I grante," quoth the devil, "by my fay."

And with that word, they riden forth their way.

And as they entered the end of the town, towards
 which the sumpnour had directed their course,—

They saw a cart that chargèd was with hay,
 Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood ;
 The carter smote, and cried as he were wood.^b

^v Do no force—take no heed. ^w Play tricks. ^x Always.

^y Know. ^z Learn. ^a Quickly. ^b Mad.

"Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?

The fiend (quoth he) you fetche, body and bones;
 much trouble have I had with you even from
 e every time that ye were foaled:—

The devil have all, both horse, and cart, and hay."
 The sumpneur said, "Here shall we have a prey;"
 And near the fiend he drew, as nought ne were,
 Full privily, and rouned^e in his ear:—

"Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith;
 Hearest thou not how that the carter saith?
 Hent^d it anon, for he hath given it thee,
 Both hay and cart, and eke his caples^e three."

"Nay," quoth the devil, "God wot never a del;^f
 It is not his intent, trust thou me well:
 Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest^g me,
 Or ellès stint a while and thou shalt see."

This carter thwacketh his horse upon the croup,
 And they began to drawen and to stoop.

"Heit now," quoth he, "There! Jesu Christ
 you bless,

And all his handy work both more and less!
 That was well twight,^h my owen Liard boy,
 I pray God save thy body, and Saint Eloy:
 Now is my cart out of the slough pardié."

"Lo, brother," quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?
 Here may ye see, mine owen deare brother,
 The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.
 Let us go forth abouten our voyáge;
 Here win I nothing upon this carriage."

When they had gone a little way out of the town,
 he Sumpnour began to whisper to his brother:

"Brother," quoth he, "here wonneth an old re-
 beck,ⁱ

That had almost as lief to lose her neck

^a Whispered.
 Believest.

^d Seize.
^h Pulled.

^e Cattle.
ⁱ Fiddle.

^f Never a bit.
 See ante, page 164.

As for to give a penny of her good ;^j
 I will have twelve pence though that she be wood,^k
 Or I will summon her to our office ;
 And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice ;
 But for thou canst not as in this country
 Winnen thy cost, take here example of me."

This sumpnour clappeth at the widow's gate ;

"Come out," he said, "thou olde very trate ;^l

I trow thou hast some frere or priest with thee."

"Who clappeth?" said this wife ; "*Benedicite!*

God save you, sir, what is your sweete will?"

"I have," quoth he, "of summons here a bill :

Up' pain of cursing, looke that thou be

To-morrow before the archdeacon's knee,

To answer to the court of certain things."

"Now Lord," quoth she, "Christ Jesu, King of
 kings,

So wisely helpe me, as I ne may :^m

I have been sick, and that full many a day :

I may not go so far (quoth she) nor ride

But I be dead, so pricketh it in my side.

May I not ask a libel, sir Sumpnour,

And answer there by my procurator

To such thing as men would opposen me?"

"Yes," quoth this sumpnour, "pay anon—let
 see—

Twelve pence to me, and I will thee acquit :

I shall no profit have thereby but lit' ;ⁿ

My master hath the profit and not I.

Come off, and let me riden hastily ;

Give me twelve pence, I may no longer tarry."

"Twelve pence!" quoth she ; "now Lady Sainte
 Mary,

So wisely help me out of care and sin,

This wide world though that I should it win,

Ne have I not twelve pence within my hold ;

Ye knowen well that I am poor and old ;

^j Goods.

^k Mad.

^l Trot.

^m Ne may help myself.

ⁿ Little.



show then your charity upon me, poor wretch."—
 "Nay, then," quoth he, "the foul fiend fetch me
 if I excuse thee, though thou shouldest be ruined."

"Alas!" quoth she, "God wot, I have no guilt."

"Pay me," quoth he, "or by the sweet Saint
 Anne,

As I will bear away thy newe pan
 For debte, which thou owest me of old,

when that thou wert false to thy husband, and

I paid at home for thy correction."

"Thou liest," quoth she, "by my salvation;

Ne was I never or now, widow or wife,

Summoned unto your court in all my life;

Ne never I was but of my body true.

Unto the devil, rough and black of hue,

Give I thy body and my pan alsó."

And when the devil heard her cursen so

Upon her knees, he said in this mannere;

"Now Mabily, mine owen mother dear,

Is this your will in earnest that ye say?"

"The devil," quoth she, "so fetch him ere he dey,°

And pan and all, but he will him repent."

"Nay, olde stot, that is ~~not mine~~ intent,"

Quoth this sumpnour, "for to ~~repenten~~ me

For any thing that I have had of thee:

I would I had thy 'frock,' and ~~every~~ cloth."

"Now brother," quoth the devil, "be not wroth;

Thy body and this pan be mine by right:

Thou shalt with me to helle yet to-night,

Where thou shalt knowen of our privy

More than a master of divinity."

And with that word the foul fiend seized him, body
 and soul, and took him to the place where these
 sumpnours have their inheritance. And God, that
 made mankind after his own image, save and guide
us one and all, and incline this sumpnour^p

good man to become.

° Die.

p The pilgrim before mentioned.

REMARKS ON THE PRIAR'S TALE.

MAKES the most remarkable feature of this tale its modern air that pervades throughout the tale of thought, humour, and language. Put aside the peculiarity of the sumpnour's character and his language, and a few of the words and pronunciations bear the impress of antiquity, and we might have thought the whole written but yesterday. There is perhaps, no other tale in Chaucer's collection which requires so little to be altered or explained, in order to adapt it to readers of the present time. We have spoken of the peculiarity of the character and office of the sumpnour; and it might be supposed that the choice of such a character in the fourteenth century, when he was every where moving to and fro upon his rascally business, at least partially unfit the tale for our enjoyment in the nineteenth. But it is not so. Nay, we think the tale is only the more interesting from the novelty that such an actor gives to it. But the secret of this unfading interest is no doubt to be found in the "spirit of life" that poets, like Chaucer, put into every thing, and in that mode of treatment which arises from the unlimited compass of intellectual vision, and which causes them to

of their rapacity, let nothing escape them that they can seize, unless

it be too heavy, or too hot,

and who might each of them say with the sumpnour,

Stomach nor conscience know I none.

The quiet humour that prevails throughout this tale is perfectly delicious. We may refer to three examples out of a host ;—the yeoman's (or fiend's) answer to the question put by the sumpnour, as to where he lives,

This yeoman him answer'd in *softe speech*,

“Brother,” quoth he, “far in the north country ;”—

the further information given a little afterwards, when the fiend tells the sumpnour

“Thou shalt here afterward, my brother dear,

Come where thou needest not of me to lere ;

For thou shalt by thine own experience,

Con in a chair red of this sentence,

Better than Virgil while he was on live,

Or Dant' also.”

And, lastly, the conclusion, when he informs the entrapped victim in the midst of all his roguery and self confidence,

“Thou shalt with me to helle yet to-night,

Where thou shalt knowen of our privy

More than a master of divinity :”—

a touch of satire that must have told with irresistible effect upon the theologians of the day, whose professed knowledge of these and similar subjects was in a ludicrously inverse ratio to the materials afforded them.

It seems probable that this tale is in subject as well as treatment entirely Chaucer's own. The indefatigable Tyrerwhitt, at all events, could discover no trace of the subject in any older author.

THE CLERK'S TALE.



THE CLERK'S TALE.

There is right at the west side of Itaille,^a
 Down at the root of Vesulus the cold,
 A lusty plain abundant of victaille;
 There many a town and tower thou may'st behold,
 That founded were in time of fathers old,
 And many another délectable sight,
 And Saluces this noble country hight.

marquis was once lord of that land, as his worthy fathers had been before him. Obedient and ready to perform his commands were all his subjects from high to low. Thus in delight he was, and hath done, for a long time, beloved and adored, through the favour of fortune, both by his subjects and his commons. To speak of lineage also, as the gentlest born of Lombardy. He had a valiant person, he was strong, and young in years; full of honour and courtesy, and possessed discretion enough to guide his country. In some things, however, this young lord Walter (for that was his name) was to be reprehended.

He might blame him thus, that he considered nought of the time coming what might him betide,
 on his lust présent^b was all his thought,
 for to hawk and hunt on every side.
 Though nigh all other carers let he slide,

^a *Italy.*^b Present pleasure.

And eke he n'ould (and that was worst of all)
Wedden no wife for aught that might befall.

On that point, and that only, his people felt sorely aggrieved, that on a certain day they went to him in a crowd, and one of them, either the wisest of their number, or the one that was most likely to be acceptable to the lord, spake thus :—

“ O noble marquis ! your humanity
Assureth us and giveth us hardiness,
As oft as time is of necessity
That we to you may tell our heaviness ;
Accepteth, lord, then of your gentleness,
That we with piteous heart unto you 'plain,
And let your eares not my voice disdain.

All have I not to do in this mattére
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as much as ye, my lord so dear,
Have alway showed me favoûr and grace,
I dare the better ask of you a space
Of audience, to shoven our request,
And ye, my lord, to do right as you lest.”

For certes, lord, so well us liketh you
And all your work, and e'er have done, that we
Ne coulden not ourselves devisen how
We mighten live in more felicity,
Save one thing, lord, if it your wille be,
That for to be a wedded man you lest,^c
Then were your people in sovereign heartès rest.

Boweth your necke under the blissful yoke
Of soverèignty, and not of service,
Which that men clepen^d spousal or wedlòck :
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtès wise,
How that our dayès pass in sundry wise ;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleeteth the time, it will no man abide.

^c Please.

^d Call.

And though your greene youth flower as yet,
 In creepeth age alway as still as stone,
 And death menaceth every age, and smet *
 In each estate, for there escapeth none ;
 And all so certain, as we know each one
 That we shall die, as uncertain we all
 Be of that day, when death shall on us fall.

accept then the true intent of those who never re-
 sed to perform your commands. We will, with
 our consent, choose you a wife in as short a time
 possible, born of the gentlest and best of the
 nd ; so that, as far as we can judge, the marriage
 ight to appear both an honour to God and to you.

Deliver us out of all this busy drede,
 And take a wife for highe Goddès sake ;
 For if it so befall, as God forbid,
 That through your death your lineäge should slake, †
 And that a strangè successor should take
 Your heritage, O ! woe were us on live ;
 Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive."

heir meek prayer, and their pitiable aspect, touched
 e marquis with pity. "Ye will," quoth he,
 mine own dear people, constrain me to that I
 ave never thought of. I rejoiced in my liberty
 which is seldom found in marriage), and now,
 hereas I was free, I must enter into servitude.

But nathèless I see your true intent,
 And trust upon your wit, and have done aye ;
 Wherefore of my free will I will assent
 To wedden me, as soon as ever I may :
 But there as ye have proffered me to-day
 To choosen me a wife, I you release
 That choice, and pray you of that proffer cease.

* *Smiteth.*

† *Slacken—cease.*

For God, it wot, that children often been
 Unlike their worthy elders them before :
 Bounty com'th all of God, not of the strenne^c
 Of which they been ygendered and ybore :
 I trust in Goddès bounty, and therefore
 My marriage, and mine estate, and rest,
 I him betake ; he may do as him lest.^b

Let me alone in choosing of my wife ;
 That charge upon my back I will endure :
 But I you pray, and charge upon your life,
 That what wife that I take, ye may assure
 To worship her, while that her life may 'dure,
 In word and work both here and ellèswere,
 As she an emperorès daughter were.

And farthermore this shall ye swear, that ye,
 Against my choice shall never grutchⁱ or strive ;
 For since I shall forego my liberty
 At your request, as ever may I thrive,
 There as mine heart is set, there will I wive.
 And, but ye will assent in such mannère,
 I pray you speak no more of this mattère."

With all their hearts they assented and swore to
 what he wished. Not one wight said " nay."
 But, ere they went, they besought him of his grace
 that he would grant them a certain day for his mar-
 riage, as soon as he could ;

For yet alway the people somewhat dread
 Lest that this marquis woulde no wife wed.

He granted them therefore a day, such as pleased
 him, on which he would be certainly wedded, say-
 ing, he did all this at their request. With humble
 and obedient hearts they thanked him fervently
 kneeling, and thus their purpose being accom-
 plished, they take their way home again.

^c Race.^b Please.ⁱ Murmur—be discontented.

And hereupon he to his officers
 Commandeth for the feaste to purvey,
 And to his privy knightès and squières
 Such charge he gave as he list on them lay,
 And they to his commandement obey ;
 And each of them doth all his diligence
 To do unto the feast all reverence.

THE SECOND PART.

NOT far from that palace of honour in which the
 marquis determined upon his marriage, there stood
 a village, delightful to the eye, in which the poor
 folk of the neighbourhood had their feasts and their
 lodging, and of their labour took their sustenance,
 after that the earth had given them plenty.

Among this poure folk there dwelt a man
 Which that was holden pourest of them all ;
 But highe God sometimè senden can
 His grace unto a little ox's stall.
 Janicola men of that thorpe^j him call.
 A daughter had he, fair enough to sight,
 And Grisildis this younge maiden hight.^k

ut if we

 speak of virtuous beauty,—
 Then was she one the fairest under sun.
 Full poorly yfosterd up was she ;
 No licorous lust was in her heart yrun :
 Well oft'ner of the well than of the tun
 She drank ; and for she woulde virtue please,
 She knew well labour, but no idle ease.

But though this maiden tender were of age,
 Yet in the breast of her virginity

^j Village.

^k Was called.

There was enclosed sad and ripe courage,¹
 And in great reverence and charity,
 Her olde poore father foster'd she :
 A few sheep, spinning, on the field she kept ;
 She woulde not be idle till she slept.

And when she homeward came she woulde bring
 Wortès and other herbès timès oft,
 The which she shred and seeth'd for her living ;
 And made her bed full hard and nothing soft ;

and still she kept up the life of her father,

With every obeisance and diligence
 That child may do to father's reverence.

Upon this poor creature, Grisilde, the marquis
 has often fixed his eye, whilst hunting, and when it
 so happened that he saw her, he gazed not with the
 wanton looking of folly, but in an earnest manner
 would commune with himself upon her behaviour.
 For in his heart he commended her womanly qua-
 lities, and also her virtue, in which she surpassed
 others of so young an age,

as well in cheer as deed.

For though the people have no great insight into
 virtue, he considered rightly her goodness, and de-
 termined that he would wed her only, if he ever
 should wed.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
 Tellen what woman that it shoulde be,
 For which marvaslle wond'red many a man,
 And saiden, when they were in privy,
 " Will not our lord yet leave his vanity ?
 Will he not wed ? Alas ! alas the while !
 Why will he thus himself and us beguile ? "

¹ A stedfast and mature spirit.



“ Then will I,” quoth this marquis softly,
 “ That in thy chamber, I, and thou, and she,
 Have a collation ; and wott’st thou why ?
 For I will ask her, if it her will be
 To be my wife, and rule her after me ?
 And all this shall be done in thy preséncé ;
 I will not speak out of thine audience.”

And in the chamber, while they were about the treaty, the people came into the house without, and wondered to see in how honest and attentive a manner she kept her dear father : but beyond all bounds might Griselda wonder, for she never before saw such a sight. Well she might be astonished to see so great a guest come in that place : she had never been accustomed to such guests ;—

For which she lookèd with full palè face.

But shortly, to follow quickly my subject,

These are the wordès that the marquis said
 To this benigne, very,^o faithful maid.

“ Grisild,” he said, “ ye shall well understand,
 It liketh to your father and to me
 That I you wed ; and eke it may so stand ;
 As I suppose, ye will that it so be :
 But these demandès ask I first (quoth he)
 That since it shall be done in hasty wise
 Will ye assent, or ellès you avise ?^p

I say this, be ye ready with good heart
 To all my lust,^q and that I freely may,
 As me best thinketh, do you laugh or smart,
 And never ye to grutchen,^r night nor day,
 And eke when I say Yea, ye say not Nay,
 Neither by word nor frowning countenance ?
 Swear this, and here I swear our álliance.”

* Truthful.

^p Or, in other words, take time to consider.

^q Pleasure.

^r Murmur.

Wondering upon this thing, quaking for dread,
 She saide; "Lord, indigne and unworthy
 Am I to thilke honour that ye me bid,
 But as ye will yourself, right so will I:
 And here I swear that never willingly
 In work nor thought I will you disobey
 For to be dead, though me were loth to deye."

"This is enough, Grisilda mine," quoth he.
 And forth he goeth with a full sober cheer
 Out at the door, and after, then came she;
 And to the people he said in this mannere;
 "This is my wife," quoth he, "that standeth here;
 Honoureth her, and loveth her, I pray,
 Whoso me loveth, there n' is no more to say."

And for that nothing of her olde gear
 She shoulde bring into his house, he bade
 That women should despoilen her right there;
 Of which these ladies weren nothing glad
 To handle her clothès, wherein she was clad.
 But nathèless, this maiden, bright of hue,
 From foot to head they clothèd have all new.

Her hairès have they comb'd, that lay untress'd
 Full rudely, and with their fingers small
 A corowne on her head they have ydress'd,

and decorated her over all with jewels. But of her
 array why should I make a tale? Hardly the
 people knew her for her beauty when she was trans-
 formed in such rich guise. The marquis espoused
 her with a ring that he had brought for the pur-
 pose, and then set her

Upon a horse snow white, and well ambling;
 and without longer delay conveyed her to his pa-
 lace, amidst joyful people that led, or met her.

And then the day is spent in revel, until the sun began to descend. And to

this newe marchioness,
God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
That it ne seemeth not by likeliness
That she was born and fed in rudeness,
As in a cot or in an ox's stall,
But nourished in an emperours hall.

To every one she waxes so dear, and so deserving of worship, that the people where she was born, and who had known her from her birth, year by year, hardly believed—though they might have sworn it, that she was Janicola's daughter. They thought, in their conjectures, she must be another creature. For though she had been ever virtuous, she increased in such excellence of manner, set in high goodness, she was

So discreet and fair of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne¹ of reverence,
And coulde so the people's heart embrace,
That each her loveth that looketh on her face.

Not only of Saluces, in the town,
Published was the bounty of her name,
But eke beside in many a regioun;
If one saith well, another saith the same.
So spreadeth of her high bounty the fame,
That men and women, young as well as old,
Go to Saluces upon her to behold.

Thus Walter, lowly, nay but royally also, having wedded with fortunate honesty, liveth in God's peace, in ease, at home: outwardly he appeared full of grace, and inasmuch as he had perceived how under low degree honest virtue was hid, the people looked upon him as a prudent man: and *such men are but seldom seen.*

¹ Worthy.



Not only this Grisildis through her wit
 Could all the feats of wifely homeliness,
 But eke when that the case required it,
 The common profit coulde she redress;
 There n' as discórd, rancóur, nor heaviness,
 In all the land that she ne could appease,
 And wisely bring them all in heartès ease.

Though that her husband absent were or non,^t
 If gentlemen or other of that country
 Were wroth, she woulde bringen them at one.^u
 So wise and ripe wordès hadde she,
 And judgèment of so great equity,
 That she from heaven sent was, as men wend^v
 People to save, and every wrong to amend.

Not long after Grisildis was wedded she bore a
 daughter. All persons had rather she had given
 birth to a male child; but the marquis and his
 people were glad thereof; and

Though a maiden child come all before,
 She may unto a knavè^w child attain
 By likelihood, since she is not barrain.

THE THIRD PART.

It happened that when this child had sucked but a
 litle time, the Marquis so longed in his heart to
 tempt his wife, in order to know her stedfastness,
 that he could not throw this marvellous desire to
 test her out of his heart. He thought to affright
 her—needlessly enough, God knows! He had es-
 sayed her enough before, and found her ever good.
What need then to tempt her, and to continue

^t Or non—or not.

^v Ween'd—believed.

^u Into harmony.

^w Male.

tempting her more and more. Though some men praise it for a subtle wit, I say for me that it is an evil to test a wife unnecessarily, and put her in anguish and in dread. The

Marquis wrought in this mannere :
He came a-night, alone there as she lay,
With sterne face and with full troubled cheer,
And saide thus, " Grisild'," quoth he, " that day
That I you took out of your poor array,
And put you in estate of high noblèss,
Ye have it not forgotten, as I guess ;

I say, Grisild', this present dignity,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be,
That I you took in poor estate full low,
For any weal ye must yourselven know.
Take heed of every word that I you say,
There is no wight that hear'th it but we tway.

Ye wot yourself well how that ye came here
Into this house, it is not long ago ;
And though to me ye be right lief^w and dear,
Unto my gentles ye be nothing so ;
They say, to them it is great shame and woe
For to be subjects, and be in serváge
To thee, that born art of a small lin'áge.

And namely,* since thy daughter was ybore,
These wordès have they spoken doubtèless ;
But I desire, as I have done before,
To live my life with them in rest and peace :
I may not in this case be reckèless :
I must do with thy daughter for the best,
Not as I would, but as my gentles lest.^v

And yet, God wot, this is full loth to me ;
But natheless withouten your weeting^z

^w Agreeable, pleasant.
^v Please.

^x Especially.
^z Knowledge.

I will nought do ; but this will I," quoth he,
 " That ye to me assenten in this thing ;
 Show now your patience in your working,
 That ye me hight,^a and swore, in your village
 The day that makèd was our marriage."

When she had heard all this, she, not amevèd,^b
 Neither in word, in cheer, or countenance,
 (For as it seemèd she was not aggrievèd)
 She saide, " Lord, all li'th in your pleasance ;
 My child and I with heartly óbeisance
 Be yourès all, and ye may save or spill °
 Your owen thing : worketh after your will.

There may no thing, so God my soule save,
 Like unto^d you that may displeasen me ;
 Ne I desirè nothing for to have,
 Ne drede for to lose, save only ye :
 This will is in mine heart, and aye shall be ;
 No length of time or death may this deface,
 Nor change my courage ° to another place."

Glad was the Marquis of her answer, though he
 feigned as he were not so.

All dreary was his cheer, and his looking
 as he left the chamber.

Soon after, going away to the distance of a furlong
 or two, he privately tells his intent to a man, and
 sends him to his wife. This man was a kind of
 sergeant whom he had often found faithful in
 important things, and such people can well exe-
 cute what is intrusted to them in bad things :
 the Marquis well knew that he loved and dreaded
 him. And when the sergeant was acquainted with
 his

^a Promised.

^b Moved.

^c Destroy.

^d Or, be liked by you, &c.

^e Inclinations—heart.

lordes will,
Into the chamber he stalkèd him full still.

"Madam, he said, ye must forgive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constrained,
Ye be so wise, that right well knownen ye
That lordes hestès may not be yfeignèd ;
They may well be bewailèd and complainèd ;
But men must needès to their lust' obey,
And so will I ; there is no more to say.

This child I am commanded for to take."
And spake no more, but out the child he hent ^s
Dispiteously, and 'gan a cheer to make,
As though he would have slain it ere he went.
Grisildis must all suffer, and all consent,
And as a lamb she sitteth meek and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.

Suspicious was the reputation of this man, suspicious his face, suspicious also his words, and the time.

Alas, her daughter that she lovèd so !

she believed he would have slain it at once, but nevertheless she neither wept nor sighed, conforming herself to the Marquis's pleasure. But at last she began to speak ; and meekly she prayed the sergeant, as he was a worthy gentleman, to let her kiss the child ere it died. Then in her lap

this little child she laid
With full sad face, and gan the child to bliss,
And lulled it, and after 'gan it kiss.

And thus she said in her benigne voice :
" Farewell, my child, I shall thee never see ;
But since I have thee markèd with the cross

^s *Desires.*

^s *Snatched.*

* Of thilke fater, yblessèd may'st thou be,
 That for us died upon a cross of tree.
 Thy soule, little child, I him betake,^b
 For this night shalt thou dien for my sake."

I trow that to a nurse in such a case it had been hard to have seen this pitiable object. Well might a mother then have cried Alas! but nevertheless, she was so stedfast that she endured all adversity, and to the sergeant said meekly,

" Have here again your little younge maid.

Go now," quoth she to the sergeant, " and do my lord's bidding. And one thing of your grace I would pray you, unless my lord in the least forbade; bury this little body in some place where neither beasts nor birds may tear it." But he would say no word to that purpose. He took the child, and went upon his way. The sergeant came again unto his lord, and told him shortly and plainly all Grisilde's behaviour and words, point for point, and presented to him his dear daughter. Somewhat this lord exhibits pity in his manner, but he holds still to his purpose,

As lordès do when they will have their will.

And bade this sergeant that he privily
 Should this childe full softe wind and wrap,
 With alle circumstances tenderly,
 And carry it in a coffer or in a lap;
 But upon pain his head off for to swappe,¹
 That no man shoulde know of his intent,
 Ne whence he came, ne whither that he went :

But at Bologn' unto his sister dear,
 That thilke time of Pavia was Countéss,

^b Take or give unto him.

¹ Strike.

He should it take, and show her this mattére,
Beseeching her to do her business,
This child to fost'ren in all gentleness ;
And whose child that it was, he bade her hide
From every wight, for aught that may betide.

The sergeant goeth, and fulfils this thing. Return we now to the Marquis, who goeth hurriedly to Grisilde, imagining by her behaviour or her words he may perceive if she be changed. But—ever the same—he could never find her otherwise than steadfast and kind.

As glad, as humble, as busy in service,
And eke in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every manner wise ;
Nor of her daughter not a word spake she.
No accident for no adversity
Was seen in her ; ne never her daughter's name
Ne nevened^k she for earnest or for game.

THE FOURTH PART.

IN this estate four years passed before Grisilde was again with child, but as God would, she then bore this Walter a male child

Full gracious, and fair for to behold.

And people told his father ; and not only he, but all the country was merry on account of this child, and they thanked and praised God. When it was two years old, and had left his nurse's breast, the Marquis on a day, caught yet another desire to tempt his wife,

^k Named.

if he may.

O needèless was she tempted in assay.
But wedded man ne connen no mesure
When that they find a patient creature.

"Wife," quoth this Marquis, "ye have heard ere
this

My people sickly bearen our marr'age,
And namely¹ since my son yboren is,
Now is it worse than ever in all our age:
The murmur slay'th my heart and my couraige,
For to mine eares cometh the voice so smart
That it well nigh destroyèd hath my heart."

Now say they thus: "When Walter is agone
Then shall the blood of Janicle succeed,
And be our lord, for other have we none."
Such wordes say my people, it is no drede;^m
Well ought I of such murmur taken heed,
For certainly I dread all such sentence,
Though they not 'plainen in my audience.

"I woulde live in peace, if that I might;
Wherefore I am disposed utterly,
As I his sister servèd ere by night,
Right so think I to serve him privily.
This warn I you, that ye not suddenly
Out of yourself for no woe should outraie;ⁿ
Be patient, and thereof I you pray."

"I have," quoth she, "said thus, and ever shall
say. I will no thing—I certainly never shall will
anything—but what may please you.

Not grieveth me at all,
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandement; that is to sain,
I have not had no part of children twain
But first sicknéss, and after woe and pain.

¹ Especially. ^m Doubt. ⁿ Break, or burst out.

Ye be my lord, doeth with your owen thing
 Right as you list ; asketh no rede ° of me ;
 For as I left at home all my clothing
 When I came first to you, right so," quoth she,
 " Left I my will and all my liberty,
 And took your clothing ; wherefore I you pray
 Do your pleasánce, I will your lust obey.

And certes, if I hadde prescience
 Your will to know, ere ye your lust me told,
 I would it do withouten negligence :
 But now I wot^p your lust, and what ye would,
 All your pleasánce firm and stable I hold ;
 For wist I that my death might do you ease,
 Right gladly would I dien you to please.

Death may not maken no comparisoun
 Unto your love." And when this marquis say^a
 The constancy of his wife, he cast adown
 His eyen two, and wondreth how she may
 In patience suffer all this array ;
 And forth he goeth with dreary countenance,
 But to his heart it was full great pleasánce.

This ugly sergeant, in the same manner or worse,
 if men can any worse devise, that he had caught
 hold of her daughter, now seized her son, that was
 full of beauty. But ever the same, she was so
 patient that she made no heaviness of cheer, but
 kissed her son, and afterwards began to bless him.
 She only prayed the sergeant

if that he might
 Her little son he would in earthe grave,
 His tender limbès, delicate to sight,
 From foulès^r and from beastès for to save.

But she might have no answer from him. He

° Counsel or advice.

^p Know.

^a Saw.

^r Birds.

went his way as though he knew no compassion ; but then tenderly took the child to Bologna.

This Marquis wondereth more and more at her patience ; and if he had not truly known beforehand that she perfectly loved her children, he would have believed that for some subtlety, and of malice, or a cruel inclination, she suffered all this with a stedfast visage. But he knew well that next to himself she certainly in every way loved her children best. But now of women I would fain ask if these assays might not suffice ? What could a sturdy husband devise more in order to prove her wifeness and her stedfastness ? And yet he continues as inflexible as ever. But there are people of such a condition that when they have taken hold of a certain purpose they cannot desist ; but, just as though they were bound to a stake, they abide by it, and slacken nothing : just so this Marquis purposes fully still to tempt his wife, as he had at first been disposed. He waiteth [awhile] to see if either by word or countenance she exhibited a change in her inclinations, but never could he find any variation.

She was aye one in heart and in visage.

And still the older she grew the more faithful and assiduous was she, if that be possible, in her love for him. It seemed that of these two there was but one will ; for as Walter pleased so was also her pleasure.

And God be thanked, all fell for the best,
She showed well, for no worldly unrest
A wife, as of herself, no thing she should
Will, in effect, but as her husband would.

And now the slander of Walter spread wondrous

wide; it was said that of a cruel heart and wickedly, because he had wedded a poor woman, he had privily murdered his children. Such murmurs were heard commonly. No wonder: there came no word to the people's ear but that the children were murdered. And they who had loved him so well before were made by this slander to hate him. A murderer's is a hateful name. But nevertheless, neither for earnest, nor sport, would he give up his purpose. His intent was fixed still to tempt his wife.

When that his daughter twelve years was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in subtle wise,
Informèd of his will, sent his message;^r
Commanding him such bullès to devise
As to his cruel purpose may suffice,
How that the Pope, as for his people's rest,
Bade him to wed another if him lest.^a

I say he bade they shoulde counterfeit
The popès bullès, making mention.
That he hath leave his firste wife to lete,^t
As by the Popè's dispensation,
To stinten^u rancour and dissention
Betwixt his people and him. Thus spake the bull,
The which they have publishèd at the full.

The rude people believed (and it is no wonder)
that things were, as they thus seemed. When the
tidings reached Grisildis, I deem her heart was full
of woe. But, stedfast evermore,

Disposèd was this humble creature,
The adversity of fortune all to endure;
Abiding ever his lust^v and his pleasance
To whom that she was given heart and all;

^r Messenger.

^u Stay.

^a Please.

^t Put away.

^v Desire.

as though they were to her, in this world, an ample sufficiency. But to tell my story shortly, the Marquis hath written a special letter, showing his intent and secretly sent it to Bologna to the Earl of Pavia who had married his sister, praying him to bring home his two children openly, and in honourable estate. One thing also he prayed earnestly, that though men might inquire, he should tell to no one whose children they were,

But say the maiden should yweddèd be
Unto the Marquis of Saluce anon;
And as this earl was prayèd, so did he;
For at day set, he on his way is gone
Toward Saluce, and lordès many [a] one
In rich array, this maiden for to guide,
Her younge brother riding her beside.

Arrayèd was toward her marriage
This freshe maiden, full of gemmès clear;
Her brother, which that seven years was of age,
Arrayèd eke full fresh in his mannère.
And thus in great nobléss, and with glad cheer,
Toward Saluces shaping their journéy
From day to day they riden in their way.

THE FIFTH PART.

Among all this, after his wicked uságe,
 This Marquis yet his wife to tempten more
 To the utterest proof of her courage
 Fully to have expérience and lore,
 If that she were as steadfast as before ;
 He on a day in open audience
 Full boisterously hath said her this sentence :

" Certes, Grisild', I had enough pleasánce
 To have you to my wife for your goodnéss,
 And for your truth and for your óbeisance ;"
 Not for your lin'age, or for your richéss ;
 But now know I in very soothfastness
 That in great lordship, if I me well advise,
 There is great servitude in sundry wise.

I may not do, as every ploughman may :
 My people me constraineth for to take
 Another wife, and crien day by day ;
 And eke the Popè, rancour for to slake,
 Consenteth it, that dare I undertake :
 And truëly, thus much I will you say,
 My newe wife is coming by the way.

Be strong of heart, and void anon her place,
 And thilke dower that ye broughten me
 Take it again ; I grant it of my grace.
 Returneth to your father's house (quoth he),
 No man may always have prosperity.
 With even heart I rede^x you to endure
 The stroke of Fortune or of ádvventure."

And she, again, answer'd in patience :
 " My Lord," quoth she, " I wot and wist^r alway

^r Obedience.

^x Advise.

^r I wot and wist alway—I know, and knew alway.

How that betwixen your magnificence
 And my povért', no wight ne can ne may
 Maken comparison ; it is no nay :
 I ne held me never digne^a in no mannère
 To be your wife nor yet your chamberer.

And in this house there ye me lady made
 (The highe God take I for my witrés,
 And all so wisely he my soule glad)
 I never held me lady or mistrés
 But humble servant to your worthiness ;
 And ever shall, while that my life may 'dure,
 Aboven every worldly créature.

That ye so long of your benignity
 Have holden me in honour and nobléy,^a
 Whereas I was not worthy for to be,
 That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
 Foryeld^b it you ; there is no more to say :
 Unto my father gladly will I wend,
 And with him dwell unto my livés end.

There I was fostered of a child full small ;
 Till I be dead, my life there will I lead ;
 A widow clean in body, heart, and all :
 For since I gave to you my 'womanhede,'
 And am your truë wife, it is no drede,
 God shielde such a lordès wife to take
 Another man to husband or to make.^c

And of your newe wife, God of his grace
 So grant you wealè and prosperity,
 For I will gladly yelden her my place
 In which that I was blissful wont to be :
 For since it liketh you, my Lord (quoth she),
 That whilom weren all my heartès rest,
 That I shall go, I will go when you lest.

But there as ye me proffer such dowàfre,
 As I first brought, it is well in my mind,

^a Worthy. ^a Nobleness. ^b Foryeld—repay. ^c

It were my wretchèd clothès, nothing fair,
 The which to me were hard now for to find.
 O goode God! how gentle and how kind
 Ye seemèd by your speech and your visàge
 The day that makèd was our marriage.

But sooth is said, algate^d I find it true,
 For in effect it provèd is on me,
 Love is not old, as when that it is new;
 But certes, Lord, for no adversity,
 To dien in this case, it shall not be
 That ever in word or work I shall repent
 That I you gave my heart in whole intent.

My Lord, ye wot that in my father's place,
 Ye did me strip out of my poore weed,
 And richèly ye clad me of your grace;
 To you brought I nought ellès out of drede
 But faith, and nakedness, and 'womanhede';
 And here again your clothing I restore,
 And eke your wedding ring, for evermore.

The remnant of your jewels ready be
 Within your chamber, I dare it safely sain.
 Naked out of my father's house (quoth she)
 I came, and naked I must turn again.
 All your pleasancè would I follow fain,
 But yet I hope it be not your intent
 That I smockless out of your palace went.

I pray you—

Let me not like a worm go by the way:
 Remember you, mine owen Lord so dear,
 I was your wife, though I unworthy were.

Vouchsafe this to me, and here I take my leave of
 you, mine own lord, lest I grieve you."

^d Always.

"The smock," quoth he, "that thou hast on thy back,
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee."

But it was with difficulty he spoke; he was so full
of pity and sorrow that he was compelled to go
away. Then

Before the folk herselven strippeth she,
And in her smock, with foot and head all bare,
Toward her father's house forth is she fare.

The folk her followen weepen in their way,
And Fortune aye they cursen as they gone;*
But she from weeping kept her eyen dry,
Ne in this tyme word ne spake she none.
Her father, that this tidings heard anon,
Curseth the day and tyme that Natúre
Shaped him to be a living creature.

No doubt, this poor old man had ever been suspicious concerning her marriage. From the first he had believed that when the lord had satisfied his inclinations, he would think it a disparagement to his estate to have alighted so low, and therefore put her away as soon as he could. Towards his daughter he goes hastily, for he knew by the noise of the people that she was coming, and, weeping sorrowfully, with his old coat tries to cover her; but it would not meet about her body, for the cloth was rude, and older by many a day than at the time of her marriage.

Thus with her father, for a certain space,
Dwelleth this flower of wifely patience,
That neither by her wordes nor her face,
Before the folk, nor eke[†] in their absénce,
Ne showed she that her was done offence,
Nor of her high estate no rémembrance
Ne hadde she as by her countenance.

* Go.

† Also.

No wonder is, for in her great estate,
 Her ghost^s was ever in plain^h humility;
 No tender mouth, no hearte delicate,
 No pompè, no semblance of royalty,
 But full of patient benignity,
 Discreet, and priddèless, aye honourable,
 And to her husband ever meek and stable.

Men speak of Job, and most for his humblèss,
 As clerkès, when them list, can well indite,
 Namelyⁱ of men, but as in soothfastness,
 Though clerkès praisen women but a lite,^j
 There can no man in humblesse him acquit
 As woman can, ne can be half so true
 As women be,—but^k it be fall'n of new.

THE SIXTH PART.

FROM Bologna the Earl of Pavia is come; and the fame thereof springs up to rich and poor, and it also reaches the ears of the people generally that he brings with him a new marchioness in such pomp and richness, that never before did the eye of man see so noble an array in all West Lombardy. The marquis, who had shaped and knew all this before the earl came, sent a message for the poor simple Grisildis.

And she with humble heart and glad viságe,
 Not with no swollen thought in her couráge,
 Came at his hest,^l and on her knees her set,
 And reverently and wisely she him gret.^m

^s Spirit.^h Full.ⁱ Especially.^j Little.^k Although.^l Bidding.^m Greeted.

"Grisilde," quoth he, "it is my entire will that this maiden, who is to be wedded to me, shall be received to-morrow in as royal a manner as it is possible in my house she can be. And also that every one, according to his rank, shall have his estate properly observed, in seating, serving, and in as highly pleasing him as I can devise. I have certainly no woman who is able to array the chambers in due order after my pleasure, and therefore I would wish that thine were all such governance. Thou knowest of old all that is agreeable to me. And though thine array be bad, and evil to look at,

Do thou thy devoir at the leaste way."

"Not only, lord, that I am glad (quoth she) To do your lust," but I desire alsó
You for to serve and please in my degree,
Withouten fainting, and shall evermo':
Ne never for no weal, ne for no woe,
Ne shall the ghost^o within my hearte stent,
To love you best with all my true intent."

And with that word she 'gan the house to dight,
And tables for to set, and beddès make,
And painèd her to do all that she might;
Praying the chamberers for Goddès sake
To hasten them, and faste sweep and shake;
And she, the most serviceable of all,
Hath every chamber arrayèd, and his hall.

About nine of the clock the earl alighted, with these two noble children. The people ran to see the sight of their rich array. And then at first amongst them it was said that Walter was no fool; *though it pleased him to change his wife, he changed for the best.*

^a Pleasure.

^o Spirit.

For she is fairer, as they deemen all,
 Than is Grisild', and more tender of age,
 And fairer fruit between them shoulde fall,
 And more pleasánt, for her high lin'age:
 Her brother eke ^p so fair was of viságe,
 That them to see the people hath caught pleasánce,
 Commending now the marquis' governance.

O stormy people, unsad,^q and ever untrue,
 And indiscreet and changing as a fane,
 Delighting ever in rumble^r that is new,
 For like the moone waxen ye and wane:
 Aye, full of clapping, dear enough a-jane,^s
 Your doom is false, your constancy evil preveth,
 A full great fool is he that on you 'lieveth.

Thus said grave persons

————— in that city,
 When that the people gazed up and down,
 For they were glad, right for the novelty,
 To have a newe lady of their town.

I make now no further mention of this, but will address myself again to Grisilde, and speak of her business and constancy. And thoroughly busy she was in every thing that appertained to the feast. Nothing abashed on account of her dress, though it was rude, and somewhat torn, with glad cheer she goes with other folk to the gate to greet the marchioness, and afterwards proceeds with her duties.

With so glad cheer his guestès she receiveth,
 And cunningly, every in his degree,
 That no defaulte no man apperceiveth,
 But aye they wondèren what she mighte be
 That in so poor array was for to see,

^p Also.

^q Unstable.

^r Rumour.

^s A small Genoese coin.

And coude such honóur and reverence;
And worthily they praisen her prudéce.

In all this meane whilè she ne stent,[†]
This maid and eke her brother, to commend
With all her heart in full benign intent,
So well that no man could her praise amend;
But at the last when that these lordès wend[″]
To sitten down to meat, he 'gan to call
Grisild', as she was busy in the hall.

"Grisild', (quoth he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wife and her beauty?"
"Right well, my lord, (quoth she) for in good fay
A fairer saw I never none than she;
I pray to God give you prosperity,
And so I hope that he will to you send
Pleasánce enough unto your lives end.

One thing beseech I you, and warn alsó,
That ye ne pricke with no tórmenting
This tender maiden, as ye have done mo,[†]
For she is fostered in her nourishing
More tenderly, and to my supposing
She mighte not adversity endure,
As could a poore foster'd creäture."

And when this Walter saw her patience,
Her gladde cheer, and no malíce at all,
And he so often had her done offence,
And she aye sad and constant as a wall,
Continuing ever her innocence over all;
This sturdy marquis 'gan his heart address
To rue upon her wifely stedfastness.

"This is enough, Grisilda mine (quoth he),
Be now no more aghast, or evil apaid,[″]
I have thy faith and thy benignity,
As well as ever woman was, assay'd,
In great estate, and poorèly arrayed.

[†] Ceased. [″] Went. [†] Me. [″] Repaid with evil.

Now know I, deare wife, thy stedfastness ;"
And her in armès took, and 'gan to keas.*

And she for wonder took of it no keep :
She hearde not what thing he to her said ;
She fared as she had started out of sleep,
Till she out of her mazedness abraid.†
" Grisild' (quoth he), by God that for us dey'd,
Thou art my wife ; none other I ne have ;
Ne never had, as God my soule save.

This is thy daughter which thou hast supposed
To be my wife ; that other faithfully
Shall be mine heir, as I have aye disposed ;
Thou bare them of thy body truely ;
At Bologn' have I kept them privily :
Take them again, for now may'st thou not say,
That thou hast lorn‡ none of thy children tway.

" And folk that otherwise have said of me,
I warn them well that I have done this deed
For no malice nor for no cruelty,
But for t' assay in thee thy womanhede,
And not to slay my children (God forbede),
But for to keep them privily and still
Till I thy purpose knew, and all thy will."

When she this heard a-swoone down she falleth
For piteous joy ; and after her swooning,
She both her younge children to her calleth,
And in her armès, piteously weeping,
Embraceth them, and tenderly kissing
Full like a mother, with her salte tears
She bathed both their visage and their hairs.

O, which a piteous thing it was to see
Her swooning and her humble voice to hear !

" *Grand mercy !* Lord God thank it you (quoth she),

* Kiss.

† Awoke.

‡ Lost.

That ye have savèd me my children dear :
 Now reck I never to be dead right here,
 Since I stand in your love and in your grace,
 No force of^a death, nor when my spirit pace.^b

O tender, O dear, O younge children mine !
 Your woful mother weenèd^c stedfastly
 That cruel houndès or some foul vermin
 Had eaten you ; but God of his mercý
 And your benigne fater tenderly
 Hath done you keep : ” and in that samè stound^d
 All suddenly she swapp’d^e adown to ground.

And in her swoon so sadly holdeth she
 Her children two, when she ’gan them embrace,
 That with great sleight and great difficulty,
 The children from her arm they ’gan arrace.^f
 O ! many a tear, on many a piteous face,
 Down ran of them that stoodden her beside ;
 Unneth^g abouten her might they abide.

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh,
 She riseth up abashèd from her trance,
 And every wight her joy and feaste maketh,
 Till she hath caught again her countenance.
 Walter her doth so faithfully pleasáncé,
 That it was dainty for to see the cheer
 Betwixt them two since they been met in fere.^h

These ladies, when that they their timè say,ⁱ
 Have taken her, and into chamber gone,
 And strippen her out of her rude array,
 And in a cloth of gold that brighte shone,
 With a corowne of many a riche stone
 Upon her head, they into hall her brought,
 And there she was honourèd as her ought.

Thus hath this piteous day a blissful end ;
 For every man and woman doth his might,

^a I care not for. ^b Pass. ^c Believed. ^d Moment.

^e Fell.

^f Take away.

^g Hardly.

^h In union.

ⁱ Saw.

This day in mirth and revel to dispend,
Till on the welkin shone the starres bright ;
For more solémn in every mannès sight
This feaste was, and greater of costáge,
Than was the revel of their marriage.

Full many a year, in high prosperity, and in rest,
and in concord, lived these two. And, richly, the
Marquis married his daughter to a lord, one of the
worthiest of all Italy. And in rest and peace, he
kept in his court his wife's father, until the soul
crept out of his body. In rest and in peace, too,
his son succeeds in his heritage, after his father's day
[of rule], and was fortunate also in his marriage,
although he did not put his wife in great trials ;

This world is not so strong, it is no nay
As it hath been in olde times yore ;

hearken, therefore, what my author saith. This
story is told, not because wives should follow Gri-
silde in humility ; for though they would desire to
do so, they would find it impossible, but because
every one, according to his position,

Shoulde be constant in adversity
As was Grisilde.

Therefore Petrarch writeth in a lofty style this story.
And since a woman was so patient unto a mortal
man, much more ought we to receive in cheerfulness
what God sends us ;

He proveth folk all day, it is no dread.

REMARKS ON THE CLERK'S TALE.

THERE is no more difficult or delicate problem in criticism—and we speak not technically, but of that general criticism which all readers more or less exercise—than to have neither too much nor too little faith in an author: give yourself up to him at once unreservedly, and you cease in a great measure to exercise an independent judgment; scan every movement and thought, and you cease to enjoy, almost to learn. Yet it is not, we venture to think, by any endeavour to hit a presumed medium between these two courses that the problem is to be solved. Two such opposite sets of mental agencies are thus brought into play at the same time, that if they are equally efficient the result is a kind of paralysis of both. They must, therefore, each work alone in order to be of much value. And why not? Is it, for instance, a poet of the loftiest pretensions who comes before us? we cannot make too sure of the genuineness and value of his credentials; but, once satisfied, let him for evermore be an honoured guest among us. Our wisdom will be thenceforward best shown in listening to his wisdom. The great poet teaches; he does not dispute.

And there is for every man, if he would but seek it, a kind of sacred pool of Bethesda, in which his spirit might wash away the impurities and incrustations that it must contract in the miry and hard ways of the world; that pool is the depths of his own heart; and the poet is the angel who ever waiteth

to stir it. Those who have read the Clerk's Tale * in the right spirit will not require to see with their own eyes the sudden flashing of the intolerable radiance, or to hear with their own ears, the beating of the strange wings, in order to satisfy themselves of the truth and character of *Chaucer's* ministrations. They will be content to feel what he has made them feel—the unapproachable beauty and irresistible power of Love, who when most trampled upon is then most truly preparing to achieve mightier conquests than ambition ever dreamt of; their first impulse will not be to attempt to measure the poet's intellectual altitude, still less to fasten instantly upon as a fault what they have happened not to appreciate or understand; it will be to consider how they may themselves do something more than they have ever done before to realize the bidding of the Divine Teacher of the Mount, whose laws here become persons, and move about among us, like their Giver, exemplifying in a human shape what they would make of humanity.

It is in such a spirit we would ourselves desire to leave this tale to its own merits, and not attempt what must be, under ordinary circumstances, an act of presumption, to enforce or to explain its lessons. But it would be idle to deny that there is a class of readers who have more taste than self-confidence, more capacity for enjoyment than ability to defend what they enjoy; and who are therefore apt to be

* In a previous volume ('Cabinet Pictures of English Life—Chaucer') we have spoken at length of the origin of this tale; we need, therefore, only repeat here that Chaucer derived its subject from Boccaccio, through the medium of Petrarch, who is supposed to have related it by word of mouth to *Chaucer*, during one of the English poet's visits to Italy.

unjust to their author for no better reason than that others are so ;—persons who, wanting their qualifications to perceive excellences, are therefore only the more eager to attack what seem to them defects. Grisilde, with such persons, is not *natural*. No mother, they say, could see her children sacrificed as she does—no wife could see another brought into her place, and be herself required to assist in the preparations for the new comer, without turning against the foot that crushes her : whereas Grisilde, on the contrary, when the second blow is struck, and her son taken away as the daughter had been before, says to the cruel destroyer—

not grieveth me at all
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandement.

True, she does say so, for Grisilde in the height of her sublime devotion to what she believes to be her duty, desires to avert from her lord even the reflection of her sorrows : but what she really suffers we feel almost too acutely. Chaucer's wonderful art, while apparently making little or no attempt to show the state of Grisilde's feelings, is in truth constantly revealing depth beneath depth of the heart of this divine woman. So, mark the revulsion that immediately follows this overstraining of the powers of nature—how the very brain seems to reel, and grow confused in the agony of the struggle between all kinds of conflicting thoughts and passions, even whilst the hands still keep their firm hold of the rock of duty to which Grisilde clings as her only safeguard.

not grieveth me at all
Though that my daughter and my son be slain
At your commandement ; that is to say,

*I have not had no part of children twain,
But first sickness and after woe and pain.*

*Ye be my lord, doeth with your owen thing
Right as you lest,^k asketh no rede^l of me;
For as I left at home all my clothing,
When I came first to you, right so (quoth she)
Left I my will, and all my liberty.
And took your clothing; therefore I you pray
Do your pleasance, I will your lust^m obey.*

In these words the readers of the fourteenth century saw at once the whole nature of Grisilde's social relations with her lord; for they were themselves living under the same, though a greatly modified, system. It is not so with us; and we must, therefore, seek explanations upon these matters if we are not willing to take the poet upon trust. To begin then. The Marquis is, as we are constantly told in order to impress its consequences upon us, the *lord* of Grisilde—that is to say, he is absolute master of her life, liberty, and honour, by the recognized laws of the feudal system. But that is not all. The period in question was not only the period of the strictest despotism, but of the warmest loyalty also; and, indeed, it was precisely because so much was done to gild the chain, until it became a mark of honour rather than of humiliation to wear it, that the system lasted so long as it did, and developed so much of goodness. A generous and chivalrous spirit would then devote himself almost as unreservedly to the service of his earthly as of his heavenly Lord. Not content with mere obedience, he sought to anticipate his every wish. So it is with Grisilde and her father, when the marriage is proposed. It would be a mistake to think that any

^k *Please.*

^l *Advice.*

^m *Pleasure.*

choice was really offered to them, of acceptance or denial; the Marquis, of his courtesy, puts it in that way; but though the old man, as we subsequently learn, had been

ever in suspect of their marriage,

he could only say what he did, "Lord, my will is as ye will," &c. As to Grisilde, she is not even directly asked to consent to the union; she is simply desired to understand that her father and himself have been pleased to determine that the union shall take place; and what she is asked is this—and we beg especial attention to the words—

Be ye ready with good heart
To all my lust,^a and that I freely may
As me best thinketh, do you laugh or smart,
And never ye to grutchen night nor day,
Neither by word nor frowning countenance?
Swear this, and here I swear our alliance.

Startling as all this may sound now, it would not have done so at the time, for it meant little more than that the subject should carry her old allegiance into her new position; and not presume upon it to interfere with her lord's will or wish—not become less bound to obey him in any conceivable extremity. And whilst Grisilde must accept the hand offered—as it is offered, the act itself is of such princely generosity and trustfulness, and proceeds from so loved as well as revered a personage (as Walter is described to have been), that her heart responds in willing gratitude to the words that other and more primary influences compel her to speak,

— *Here I swear,—that never willingly
In work nor thought I will you disobey:*

^a Pleasure.

She did not conceive—no one could have conceived—the awful consequences to which this solemn engagement bound her, in addition to and beyond all her ordinary ties; but, being bound, she determines with the whole force of her steady and resolute, though most gentle spirit, to fulfil her obligations. And thus we have before us two phases of the character of Grisilde—a boundless notion of feudal loyalty, and a heartfelt sense of an unredeemable debt of gratitude to the Marquis for seeking her in and lifting her out of her lowly condition; each phase enhancing the other a thousand fold; and both solemnly confirmed by the oath administered to Grisilde previous to the marriage. Surely here are influences enough to explain all her self-sacrifices, and make them *natural* enough, in the commonest sense of the word, if we only find that the poet's machinery for setting his story in motion (the peculiar character of the Marquis) is adequate, and that Grisilde herself has *power* to go through them, which certainly neither her loyalty, nor her gratitude, nor her oath, nor her wedded love, could of themselves give her.

The character of the Marquis may be looked upon as an illustration of the fantastic appetites that uncontrolled will is apt to engender in the hearts of the best of men. All is well both within and without his dominions. He is touched neither by "malice domestic" nor "foreign levy;" his subjects love him, and are in perfect contentment with his government. Nowhere is there stirring even the faintest breath of opposition to ruffle and give a bracing tendency to the atmosphere of his mind. The *very excess and perfection of his power makes him feel less powerful by giving him*

no opportunity of testing it. There is nothing for him to do that seems to him worth doing. Wanting healthy, the mind seeks unhealthy action. For a time, however, and whilst the buoyancy of youth partially counteracted the growing morbidness created by his position, the Marquis found a vent for his wasting energies in the sports of the field, and satisfied his eternal craving for some present and passing pleasure by hawking and hunting on every side. And before these had quite failed to satisfy him, he was interrupted in their enjoyment by the appeal of his subjects, and by the new train of thought and feeling that his consequent marriage created. But after a while the old craving returns with tenfold force; until at last the ever restless mind, in its wanderings after fresh excitement, lights suddenly upon the idea of tempting his wife. And there are thoughts that, once as it were glanced at, become as full of fascination and danger as the eye of the glittering and deadly snake: this is so to the Marquis. Grisilde's whole character is of so lofty a nature as to render it doubtful whether she *could* be forced, by an amount of adversity that might be inflicted upon her, to break her sworn and unconditional allegiance to him, or to be unfaithful to the higher principles that actuate her being. What an opportunity for a man satiated with the eternal reflection of his own will in the mirror of the public mind! There is a career open to him in which there is really a possibility of failure! It is true, he cannot move a step in it without inflicting the *deepest* anguish upon his beloved wife; but he has *not* been much accustomed to weigh very *the exact* amount or nature of the emotion

others; and though his real affection for her necessarily involves some sympathy, he passes off all unpleasant and impeding considerations by assuring himself that none of the evils he may inflict will be real or at least irremediable. Perhaps, too, he unconsciously and most incorrectly attributes to her a share in his own sensations and views, and therefore not only excuses himself by reflecting on the bliss it will be in his power to confer on her in the end, when she is informed as to the truth, but half fancies she may be content to exchange a comparatively dull state of existence for one where the blackest shadows and brightest sunshine shall in succession, cross the path. He determines upon the dangerous and cruel, but most attractive experiment. Poor Grisilde's trials begin. And she passes through them triumphantly. But how? Whence, and of what nature is the power that can support her in all her anguish? The power is from God, a part of His own essence, and its name is Love. Love, whose law it is that the more injury it receives the more should it exhibit its true character, which is still Love, to the injurer; and whose faith it is that thus alone can evil be stopped at its source instead of being allowed to go on—acting, and, on the plea of resentment, re-acting each upon each continually. Is not this a faith for a martyrdom? They are an "army" the men and women who have gone to the stake in order to maintain the right of reading differently from their fellows the same common Bible; nay, sometimes, we fear, for little more than the mere right of sending others to that same stake; and yet there are those who doubt the existence of the *Martyr of Love*.

Grisilde is such a martyr. Her story is but an embodiment of the spirit which eighteen hundred years ago shone through the words and acts of Him who died upon the cross, saying "Forgive them; they know not what they do:" and which, for eighteen hundred, or eighteen times eight hundred years to come, can alone, by its diffusion through all hearts and institutions, redeem or preserve the world from the thousand ills it has been heir to. Upon the altar of Love the poem of the Clerk's Tale remains through all time an offering of unapproachable value.

END OF VOL. I.

CANTERBURY TALES,

FROM

CHAUCE R.

BY JOHN SAUNDERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

C. COX, 12, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1847.

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THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

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THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary, there dwelt a king who warred with Russia, through which many a doughty man died. This noble king was called Cambuscan, who in his time was so greatly renowned that there was nowhere—in no region—

So excellent a lord in alle thing,
Him lacked nought that 'longeth to a king ;

to speak of him as of the class of which that he was born. He kept the faith to which he had pledged himself ; he was also rich, hardy, and wise ; full of pity, just, and ever the same ;

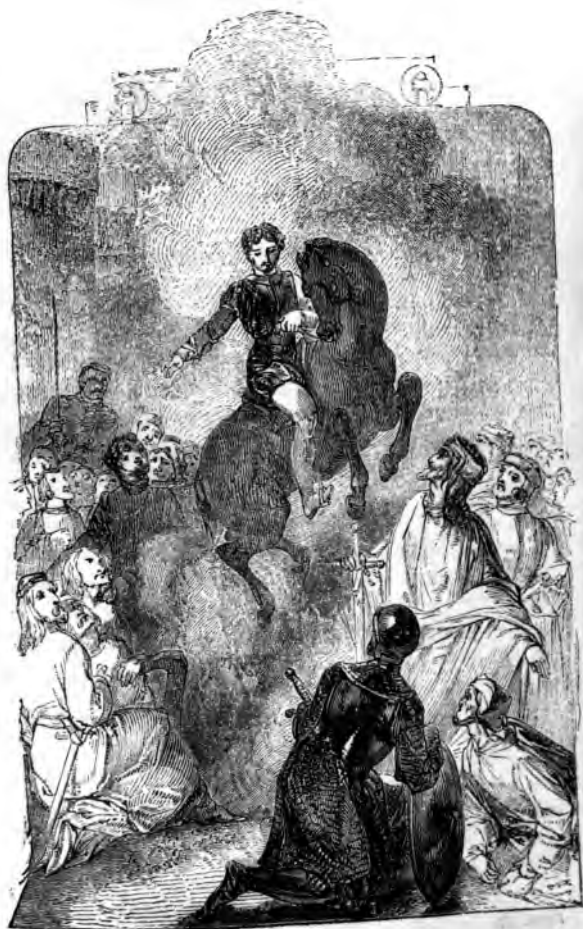
True of his word, benign, and honourable,
Of his courage as any centre stable,
Young, fresh, and strong,

and as desirous of honour in arms as any bachelor of his household.

A faire person he was and fortunate,
And kept alway so well royal estate,
That there n' as nowhere such another man.
This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,
Hadde two sons by Elfeta his wife,

of which the eldest was called Algarsife, and the other Camballo.

A daughter had this worthy king also,
That youngest was, and highte Canace :



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But for to tellen you all her beauty
 It li'th not in my tongue, ne in my conning;
 I dare not undertake so high a thing:
 Mine English eke is insufficient.

It must be an excellent Rhetorician that could find
 colours sufficient for that art, if he should in any
 way attempt to describe her:

I am not such, I must speak as I can.
 And so befell that when this Cambuscan
 Hath twenty winter borne his diadem,
 As he was wont from year to year, I deem,

he caused the feast of his nativity to be proclaimed
 throughout the city of Sarra, on the last Ides of
 March, as it fell according to the year.*

Phœbus the sun full jolif was and clear,
 For he was nigh his exaltation
 In Martes face, and in his mansion
 In Aries, the cholerick hot sign.
 Full lusty was the weather and benign,
 For which the fowls against the sunny sheen
 (What for the season and the younge green)
 Full loude sungen their affections:
 Them seemèd had gotten them protections
 Against the sword of winter keen and cold.
 This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
 In royal vestiments, sat on his dais
 With diadem, full high in his paláce;

and held his feast so rich, and so solemn, that there
 was none in the world like it.

* * The eight days in each month known among the
 Romans as the Ides, were reckoned backwards, from the
 13th, except in the months of March, May, July, and Octo-
 ber, when the reckoning was from the 15th; the 15th o
 March therefore was Cambuscan's birth-day.

Of which, if I shall tellen all th' array,
Then would it occupy a summer's day ;
And eke it needeth not for to devise
At every course the order of their service.

I will not tell of their strange dishes, nor of their
swans, nor their young herons. In that land also,
as old knights tell, there is some meat held as a
dainty that in this land men care little for. No
man may report all.

I will not tarrien you, for it is prime ;
And, for it is no fruit, but loss of time ;

I will betake me unto my purpose.

And it so befell that, after the third course, while
the king sat in all his nobleness,

Hearkening his minstrels their thinges play'
Before him at his board deliciously ;
In at the halle door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirrór of glass ;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging ;
And up he rideth to the highe board,
In all the hall ne was there spoke a word
For marvel of this knight ; him to behold
Full busily they waiten, young and old.

This strange knight, that came thus suddenly,
All armed save his head full richely,
Saluteth king and queen, and lordes all,
By order as they satten in the hall,
With so high reverence and óbservance,
As well in speech as in his countenance,
That Gawain with his olde courtesy,
Though he were come again out of Faëry,
Ne could him not amenden with a word.
And after this, before the highe board,

He with a manly voice said his message
 After the form usèd in his language,
 Withouten vice of syllable or of letter :
 And for his talè shoulde seem the better,
 Accordant to his wordès was his cheer,

as the art of speech teaches to those who learn it.
 Albeit that I cannot express his lofty manner,

Nor cannot climben o'er so high a stile ;

yet this I say, that to a common understanding,
 all that ever he meant amounteth to thus much,

If it so be that I have it in mind :

He said, " The king of Araby and of Inde,
 My liegè lord, on this solemne day
 Saluteth you as he best can and may,
 And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,
 By me, that am all ready at your hest,
 This steed of brass, that easily and well
 Can in the space of a day natural
 (This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours)
 Where so you list, in drouht or elles showers,
 Bearen your body into every place
 To which your hearte willeth for to pace,

through foul or fair, and notwithstanding any error
 or defect on your part ;^b

Or if you list to flee as high in th' air
 As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,
 This samè steed shall bear you evermore,
 Withouten harm, till ye be there you lest
 (Though that ye sleepen on his back or rest),

and turn again, with the turning of a pin. He
*that wrought it was capable of many a subtle con-
 trivance.*

^b Withouten wemme of you, through foul or fair.

He waited many a constellation,
 Ere he had done his operation,
 And knew full many a seal and many a bond.

This mirror eke that I have in mine hond
 Hath such a might that men may in it see
 When there shall fall any adversity
 Unto your regne^c or to yourself alsó,
 And openly who is your friend or foe.
 And over all this, if any lady bright
 Hath set her heart on any manner wight,
 If he be false, she shall his treason see,
 His newe love, and all his subtlety,
 So openly that there shall nothing hide.

Wherefore against this lusty summer tide,
 This mirror and this ring, that ye may see,
 He hath sent to my Lady Canace,
 Your excellent daughter that is here.

The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear,
 Is this, that if her list it for to wear,
 Upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,
 There is no fowl^d that fleeth under heaven

hat she shall not well understand his speech, and
 know his meaning openly and plain, and answer
 him in his own language.

And every grass that groweth upon root
 he shall also know, and whom it will heal,

All be his woundes ne'er so deep and wide.

This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,
 Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,
 Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
 Were it as thick as is a branchèd oak;
 And what man that is wounded with the stroke
 Shall ne'er be whole, till that you list of grace
 To stroke him



THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

ith the flat part where he is hurt ; this is to s
e must with the flat of the sword

Stroaken him in the wound, and it will close.

'his is the very truth without deceit :

It faileth not while it is in your hold."

And when this knight hath thus his talè told,

He rideth out of hall, and down he 'light ;

His steede, which that shone as sunne bright,

Stood in the court as still as any stone.

This knight is to his chamber led anon,

And is unarm'd, and to the meat yset.

These presents are fetched away in a rich
nanner, that is to say, the mirror and the sword,
which are borne anon into the high tower by cer-
ain officers specially appointed. And the ring is
borne, solemnly, to Canace, as she sat at the board.
But certainly, without fable, as to the horse of
rass, it may not be removed. It stands as it were
'ued to the ground. No man may drive it out of
e place by such engines as the windlass or pulley,
d for this reason, they know not the craft. And
efore they have left it in the place, until the
ight hath taught them the manner of removing
, as ye shall afterwards hear.

Great was the press that swarmèd to and fro,
To gazen^e on this horse that standeth so ;
For it so high was, and so broad and long,
So well proportionèd for to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lombardy ;—
'herewith so horsely and so quick of eye
as it a gentle Polish courser were ;
or certes from his tail unto his ear
ature nor Art ne could him not amend
no degree, as all the people ween'd.

^e Garen, or gaze.

But evermore their moste wonder was
 How that it coude go, and was of brass :
 It was of Faërie, as the people seem'd.
 Diversè folk diversèly had deem'd :
 As many heads as many wittès be.

They murmured as doth a swarm of bees. They
 made reasons

after their fantasies,
 Rehearsing of the olde poetries,
 And said it was ylike the Pegasee,
 The horse that hadde wingès for to flee.

Or else it was the horse of Sinon, the Greek, that
 brought Troy to destruction, as men may read in
 the old Gestes.

“ My heart (quoth one) is evermore in drede ;
 I trow some men of armès be therein,
 That shapen them this city for to win :
 It were right good that all such thing were know.”
 Another rownd^e to his fellow low,
 And said, “ He lieth, for it is rather like
 An apparence ymade by some magíc,
 As jugglers playen at these feastès great.”

Thus they jangle and discuss of sundry doubts :
 judging, as ignorant people commonly do, of things
 made with greater subtlety than they in their igno-
 rance can comprehend :—

They deemen gladly to the badder end.
 And some of them wondered on the mirrór
 That borne was up into the master tower,
 How men might in it suche thingès see.
 Another answer'd and said, “ It might well be
 Naturally by compositions
 Of angles, and of sly reflections ;”
 And saide that in Rome was suche one.

^e Whispered.

They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon
 And Aristotle, that written in their lives
 Of quaint mirrors and of perspectives,
 As known they that have their bookès heard.

And other folk have wond' red on the sword
 That woulde piercen throughout every thing;
 And fell in speech of Telephus the king,
 And of Achilles for his quaint spear,

for he both could heal and hurt with it, in the very
 same manner as men may with the sword of which
 ye have yourselves just now heard.

They speak of sundry modes of hardening of
 metal; and they speak also of medicines, and of
 how and when it should be hardened, all of which
 is unknown to me.

Then spoken they of Canace's ring,
 And saiden all that such a wondrous thing
 Of craft of ringès heard they never none,
 Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon,
 Hadden a name of cunning in such art.
 Thus say the people: and drawn them apart.

But natheless some saiden that it was
 Wondrous to maken of fern ashen glass,
 And yet is glass nought like ashen of fern;

but inasmuch as they had known it so before,

Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.

As sorè wond'ren some on cause of thunder,
 On ebb, and flood, on gossamer, and on mist,

and, on all things, until the cause be known.

Thus janglen they, and deemen and devise,
 Till that the king 'gan from his board arise.
 Phœbus hath left the angle meridional,
 And yet ascending was the beast royal,
 The gentle *Lion*, with his Aldrian,
 When that this Tartar King, this Cambuscan,

Rose from his board, there as he sat full high ;
 Before him go'th the loude minstrelsy
 until he came to his chamber of State, whiere

they sounden divers instruments,
 That it is like a heaven for to hear.

Now dancen lusty Venus' children dear,
 For in the Fish their lady sat full high,
 And looketh on them with a friendly eye.
 This noble king is set upon his throne,
 This strange knight is fetch'd to him full soon,
 And on the dance he go'th with Canace.

Here is the revel and the jollity
 That is not able a dull man to devise ;
 He must have knowen Love and his service,
 And been a feast-like man, as fresh as May,
 That shoulde you devisen such array.

Who could tell you of the form of the strange
 dances, or of the fresh countenances engaged in
 them, —

Such subtle lookings and dissimulings,
 for dread of the perceptions of jealous men?

No man but Launcelot, and he is dead.

I pass over, therefore, all this delight. In this
 jolliness I leave them, until men address themselves
 to supper.

The Steward bade them carry round the spices,
 and also the wine, during all the melody ; the
 squires and the ushers go, and the wine and spices
 are immediately brought. They eat and drink,
 and, when this was ended, proceed unto the temple,
 as was proper.

*The service done, they suppen all by day.
 What needeth you rehearsen their array?*

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

Each man wot well that at a king's feast
Is plenty to the most and to the least,
And dainties more than be in my knowing.

And after supper goeth this noble king
To see this horse of brass, with all a rout
Of lordes and of ladies him about:

Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass,
that since the great siege of Troy, where men al
wondered upon a horse, there never was such wond
dering as now.

But, finally, the king asketh the knight
The virtue of this courser, and the might,
And prayed him to tell his governance.

This horse anon 'gan for to trip and dance.
When that the knight laid hand upon his rein,
And saide:

"Sir, there is no more to say, but that when you
wish to ride anywhere, ye must turn a pin that
stands in his ear, which I shall tell you between
ourselves. Ye must also name to him what place
or what country ye wish to ride to. And when ye
come where you wish to stay, bid him descend,
and then turn another pin, for there lies the effect
of all the contrivance,

And he will down descend and do your will, ;
And in that place he will abiden still,
Though all the world had the contrary swore,
He shall not thence be drawn——

be carried. Or if you wish to bid him to be-
from thence, turn this pin, and he will imme-
ly vanish out of the sight of every kind of
u, and come again, be it day or night, when
lease to call him again, in such manner as I
all you, and that full soon, betwixt ourselves:

Ride when you list, there is no more to do."

Informed when the king was of the knight,
And hath conceived in his wit aright
The manner and the form of all this thing,
Full glad and blithe this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel as befor.

The bridle is into the tower yborne,

and kept among his pleasant and dear jewels. The horse vanished out of their sight, in what manner I know not. Ye get no more from me. Thus I leave in jollity and mirth Cambuscan feasting his lords, until that

Well nigh the day began to spring.

THE SECOND PART.

The nurse of digestion

the Sleep

'Gan on them wink, and bade them taken keep
That muchel drink and labour will have rest ;
And with a gaping mouth them all he kessed,^s
And said, that it was time to lie adown,
For blood was in his domination :

Cherisheth blood, natúres friend, quoth he.

They thanken him gaping, by two, by three ;
And every wight 'gan draw him to his rest,
As sleep them bade ; they took it for the best.

Their dreames shall not now be told for me.

Their heads were full of fumes, that cause dreams of no consequence. They slept, for the most part, until it was full day, Canace only excepted. She *had been*, like women, very moderate ; for she had

^s Kissed.

taken her leave of her father, in order to go to rest, soon after it was evening. She did not desire to grow pale, nor to appear on the morrow unfit for feasts. She

slept her firste sleep, and then awoke :
 For such a joy she in her hearte took
 Both of her quaint ring and of her mirrór,
 That twenty time she changed her colour ;

and in her sleep, through the impression of her mirror, she had a vision ; whereupon, before the sun began to glide upwards, she calleth upon her governess beside her, and said she wished to get up.

These olde women that be gladly wise,
 As is their mistress, answer'd her anon,
 And said, " Madame, whither will ye gone
 Thus early ? for the folk be all in rest."

" I will," quoth she, " arisen, for me lest^h
 No longer for to sleep, and walk about."

Her mistress clepethⁱ women a greate rout,
 And up they risen, well a ten or twelve.
 Up riseth freshe Canace herselfe,
 As ruddy and bright as is the younge Sun
 That in the Ram is four degrees yrun ;
 No higher was he when she ready was ;
 And forth she walketh

easily, a short distance, arrayed fittingly for the pleasant and sweet season,

Lightly for to play, and walken on foot,
 with only five or six of her attendants, and forth
 she goes in a narrow valley^k in the park.

^h Desire.

ⁱ Calleth.

^k We here adopt Mr. Cowden Clarke's version of the line—

" And in a trenche forth in the park go'th she."

The vapour that glided from the earth maketh
the sun to seem broad and ruddy; but, neverthe-
less, it was so fair a spectacle that it made all their
hearts grow lighter,

What for the season and the morrowning,
And for the fowls that she hearde sing;
For right anon she wiste what they meant
Right by their song, and knew all their intent.
The knotte¹ why that every tale is told,
If it be tarried till the lust be cold

of them that have hankered after it a long time,

The savour passeth ever longer the more
For fulsomeness of the prolixity;
And by that same reason thinketh me
I should unto the knotte condescend,
And maken of her walking soon an end.

Amidst a tree, for-dry, as white as chalk,
As Canace was playen in her walk,
There sat a falcon over her head full high,
That with a piteous voice so 'gan to cry,
That all the wood resounded of her cry;
And beaten had herself so piteously
With both her wingès till the redde blood
Ran endelong the tree there as she stood;

And ever the same she constantly shrieked and
cried, and with her beak so plucked herself, that
there is no tiger nor cruel beast that dwelleth in
forest or wood but must have wept, if he could
weep,

For sorrow of her, she shriek'd alway so loud.

No man ever lived who could well describe a
falcon, that heard of another so fair,

¹ The *knotte* means the nucleus—the kernel—the essential matter or object of every tale.

As well of plumage, as of gentleness,
 Of shape, of all that might yreckoned be.
 A falcon peregrinè seemèd she
 of foreign land ;

and ever as she stood
 She swoonèd now and now for lack of blood,
 Till well nigh is she fallen from the tree.
 This faire kingès daughter, Canace,
 That on her finger bare the quaintè ring,
 Through which she understood well every thing
 that any bird may say in his language, and could
 answer him in his language again, hath under-
 stood what the falcon said ; and she almost died for
 pity.

And to the tree she go'th full hastily,
 And on this falcon looketh piteously,
 And held her lap abroad, for well she wist
 The falcon muste fallen from the twist
 When that she swoonèd next, for fault^m of blood.
 A longe while to waiten her she stood,
 Till at the last she spake in this mannère
 Unto the hawk, as ye shall after hear.

“ What is the cause, if it may be told, that ye be
 in this furious pain of hell ? ” quoth Canace unto
 the hawk.

“ Is this for sorrow of death, or loss of love ?
 For as I trow, these be the causes two
 That causen most a gentle heartè woe ;
 Of other harm it needeth not to speak,

for ye yourself take vengeance upon yourself ;
 which proveth well that either ire or dread must
 be the cause of your cruelty, since I see no other
 chase you. For the love of God, show favour
 unto yourself ;

Or what may be your help ? for west ne eas
 Ne saw I never ere now no bird ne beast,
 That farèd with himself so piteously.
 Ye slay me with your sorrow verily.
 I have of you so great compassion.
 For goddès love come from the tree adown ;
 And as I am a kingès daughter true,
 If that I verily the causes knew
 Of your disease, if it lay in my might
 I would amend it ere that it were night,
 As wisely help me the great God of kind :
 And herbès shall I right enough yfind,

with which to heal speedily your hurt.”
 shrieked the falcon yet more piteously tha
 and anon fell to the ground, and lieth in a
 as dead as lieth a stone. And Canace hath
 her in her lap until she began to awake ; ar
 she had started out of her swoon, she said t
 her hawk’s language,

“ That pity runneth soon in gentle heart
 (Feeling his similitude in painès smart)
 Is proved alle day, as men may see,
 As well by work as by authority,
 For gentle heartè kitheth ^a gentleness.
 I see well that ye have on my distress
 Compassion, my faire Canace,
 Of very womanly benignity,
 That nature in your principles hath set.

Not for any hope to fare the better, but ii
 to obey your free heart, and to make
 beware by me, . . . I will confess my
 And even whilst she told her sorrows,
 wept as she would dissolve to water, ur

^a Showeth.



Falcon bade her be still, and with a sigh she thus said to her :

“There I was bred (alas, that ilke day !)
And foster'd in a rock of marble grey
So tenderly, that nothing ailèd me.
I ne wist not what was adversity
Till I could flee full high under the sky.

Then dwell'd a tercelet me faste by,
That seemèd well of alle gentleness,
All were he full of treason and falsenés.
It was so wrappèd under humble cheer,
And under hue of truth in such mannère,
Under pleasánce, and under busy pain,
That no wight could have ween'd he coulede feign,
So deep in grain he dièd his colour.
Right as a serpent hideth him under flowers,
Till he may see his timè for to bite,

just so this hypocrite of the god of love doth his obedience and his ceremonies, and keeps up in appearance all observances

That soundeth unto gentleness of love.
As on a tomb is all the fair above,
And under is the corpe, such as ye wot ;
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot.
And in this wise he servèd his intent,
That, save the fiend, none wiste what he meant :
Till he so long had weepèd and complained,
And many a year his service to me feigned,
Till that mine heart, too piteous, and too nice,
All innocent of his crown'd malice,
For feare of his death, as thoughte me,
Upon his oathès and his surèty,
Granted him love, on this conditioun,
That evermore mine honour and renown
Were savèd

both in private and in public.

This is to say, that, after his desert,
 I gave him all mine heart, and all my thought,
 And God and he know, in other ways, nothing ;)

And took his heart in change of mine for aye ;
 It truly is it said, many a day is gone since. A
 True knight and a thief think not alike.

And when he saw the thing so far ygone
 That I had granted him fully my love
 In such a guise as I have said above,
 And given him my true heart as free
 As he swore that he gave his heart to me,
 Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,
 Fell on his knees with so great humblés,
 With so high reverence, as by his cheer,
 So like a gentle lover of mannere,
 So ravished, as it seemèd, for the joy,
 That never Jason, ne Paris of Troy—
 Jason ? certes, ne never other man,
 Since Lamech was, that alder first began
 To loven two, as writen folk beforn,^o
 Ne never sithen the first man was born,
 Ne coulde man, by twenty thousand part,
 Counterfeit the sophisms of his art,

or were worthy to unbuckle his shoe ; nor
 could their doubleness of feigning approach his ;
 or could they so thank one

as he did me :
 His manner was a heaven for to see
 To any woman, were she never so wise ;
 o painted he

As well his wordès, as his countenance.
 And I so lov'd him for his obeisance,

^o *As folk write of old time.*

And for the truth I deemed in his heart,
 That if so were that anything him smart,
 All were it never so little and I it wist,
 Me thought I felt death at mine heartes twist.
 And shortly, so far forth this thing is went,
 That my will was his willes instrument;
 This is to say, my will obeyed his will
 In alle thing,

as far as reason permitted, that kept ever the
 bounds of my worship. Nor had I ever thing so
 dear, nor dearer, God knows, as him; nor ever
 shall have more.

This lasteth longer than a year or two,
 That I supposed of him nought but good.
 But finally, thus at the last it stood,
 That fortune woulde that he muste twinne
 Out of that place, which that I was in.
 Whether me was woe, it is no question;
 I cannot make of it description.
 For one thing dare I tellen boldly,
 I know what is the pain of death thereby,
 Such harm I felt

that he might not remain.

So on a day of me he took his leave,
 So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily
 That he had felt as muchel harm as I,
 When that I heard him speak, and saw his hue.
 But natheless, I thought he was so true,
 And eke that he repairen should again
 Within a little while, sooth to sain;—
 And reason would eke that he muste go
 For his honoúr, as often happ'neth so,
 That I made virtue of necessity,
 And took it well, since that it muste be.

As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,
 And took him by the hand, Saint John to borrow,^a
 And said him thus: "Lo, I am yours all,
 Both such as I have been to you and shall."

What he answer'd, it needeth not rehearse;
 Who can say bet' than he, who can do worse?
 When he hath all well said, then hath he done;

Therefore it behoveth one to have a full long spoon
 that shall eat with a fiend: thus have I heard
 of.

So at the last, he muste forth his way:
 And forth he fleeth, till he come there him lest,
 When it came him to purpose for to rest,
 I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
 That alle thing repairing to his kind
 Gladdeth himself; thus say men, as I guess:
 Men loven of proper kind newfangleness,
 As birdes do that men in cages feed.
 For though thou night and day take of them heed,
 And strew their cage fair and soft as silk,
 And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
 Yet right anon as that his door is up,
 He with his feet will spurnen down his cup,
 And to the wood he will, and wormes eat;
 So newefangled be they of their meat,
 And loven novelties of proper kind;
 No gentleness of blood ne may them bind.

So fared this tercelet, alas the day!
 Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,
 And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
 He saw upon a time a kite flee,
 And suddenly he lov'd this kite so,
 That all his love is clean from me ago';^b
 And hath his truthe falsed in this wise.

^a is to say, to borrow the saint's name in pledge of
 of her asseverations.
^b e.

Thus hath the kite my love in her service,
And I am lorn withouten remedy."

And with that word the Falcon began to cry, and swooneth again in Canace's lap. Great was the sorrow for the hawk's harm made by Canace and all her women. They knew not how they might gladden the falcon. But Canace beareth her home in her lap, and began to wrap her softly in plasters where with her beak she had hurt herself.

And now Canace cannot but dig herbs out of the ground, and make new salves of herbs, precious and fine of hue, to heal the hawk. From day to night she busies herself with all her might. And by her bed's head she made a mew, and covered it with blue velvet,

In sign of truth that is in woman seen :
And all without the mew is painted green,
In which were painted all these false fowls
As be these tidifes, tercelettes, and owls ;
And pies, on them for to cry and chide,
Right for despite were painted them beside.

Thus leave I Canace keeping her hawk. I will no more at present speak of her ring till it come again into my purpose to say

How that this Falcon got her love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus,
The king's son, of which that I you told ;

But henceforth I will hold my course to speak of adventures and battles : such great marvels were never yet heard.

First will I tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his time many a city wan.
And after will I speak of Algarife,
How that he won Theodora to his wife,

For whom full oft in great peril he was,
 Ne had he been holpén by the horse of brass.
 And after will I speak of Camballo,
 That fought in listès with the brethren two
 For Canace, ere that he might her win :
 And there I left I will again begin.

REMARKS ON THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

There is a great deal of admiration prevalent in the critical world that would be well exchanged for a little silent and thoughtful study of the person or thing admired. By an easily explained but peculiarly irrational process, the criticism we refer to ceases to inquire into a great writer's excellences just as they grow more and more numerous and of higher and subtler quality ; and whether it be—as with one class of admirers—from sheer inability to grasp the mighty subjects opened, or from an almost impatient sense of the difficulty of adding anything of value to the endless stores of commentary and illustration before poured out—as with another, the common result is merely to heap up fresh epithets as unmeaning and as mischievous as those that the satirist so good-humouredly laughed at in connection with Shakspeare,

— whom you, and every playhouse bill,
 Style the Divine—the Matchless—what you will.*

That this is a very mischievous result must appear evident when we consider that the best chosen

¹ * Pope—Imitations of Horace, Epistle I.
 VOL. II.

words or phrases are only of value so long as they call up to the mind of the hearer or reader the ideas that originally suggested them; and none will do this when the gloss of novelty has worn off by frequent repetition; they will then merely occupy the mind as with so much useless lumber, and help to exclude the presence of the very ideas they were intended to introduce.

Between the two classes of admirers—those who could not thoroughly understand Chaucer, and those whose sense of the difficulty of worthily explaining what they thought and felt for him has apparently made them slacken their endeavours to worthily think and feel, the poet of the *Canterbury Tales* has suffered grievous wrong; and while the existence of the first class might have been anticipated, and may for the most part be disregarded—the second, including as it does some of the highest names in English literature, cannot but suggest to us the importance of getting rid of all mere declamatory criticism, however reverential the shape it assumes, and demanding from all who praise as well as from all who condemn reasons for the faith that is in them. In so doing they would learn much, and we still more.

We have already (in the former volume) seen how Dryden professed to admire Chaucer, and what practical results his admiration brought with it. We now propose to endeavour to give point to the foregoing remarks by a brief consideration of the treatment the *Squire's Tale* has received from those who—of loftier poetical nature than Dryden—might have been its most judicious as well as its most enthusiastic and illustrious admirers. *It is Spenser who speaks of*

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefil'd,
 who writes these charming lines in the ' Fairy
 on:—

Then pardon, O most sacred happy spirit !
 That I thy labours lost may thus revive,
 And steal from thee the meed of thy due merit,
 That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
 And, being dead, in vain yet many strive ;
 Ne dare I like ; but, through infusion sweet,
 Of thine own spirit which doth in me survive,
 I follow here the footing of thy feet,
 That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet.

how does Edmund Spenser fulfil a project so
 of hopefulness? Let us see. Chaucer, as
 gh half anticipating the non-completion, or
 lation of the poem, has given us one of the
 explanatory of finger-posts, showing in what
 tion any one must move who would " follow
 ooting " of his feet. In the concluding pas-
 of the incomplete poem, Chaucer says,

First I will tellen you of Cambuscan,
 That in his timè many a city wan ;

Spenser will do no such thing; of the chief
 of the tale he says nothing.

Chaucer then continues—

And after will I speak of Algarsife
 How that he won Theodora to his wife,
 For whom full oft in great peril he was,
 Ne had he been holpen by the horse of brass.

f this matter again, the horse being the chief
 e material agencies of the story, Spenser says
 ing.

Chaucer goes on—

And after will I speak of Camballo,
That fought in listès with the brethren *two*
For Canace, ere that he might her win,

or in other words, ere the latter might extricate her from some danger into which she had fallen. This is the sole point with which Spenser troubles himself, and as far as his avowed object and Chaucer's reputation is concerned (we must be thoroughly understood not to extend our remarks to stretch a hair's-breadth further), it is impossible, we think, to compliment him upon what he has done with it. The mere isolation of a fragment of a building from the work of so consummate an architect as Chaucer, and the unnatural development of that fragment into a something as big as the whole was intended to have been, was an act sufficient in itself to prevent all chance of Spenser's treading in Chaucer's footsteps, or "meeting" with his "meaning." But that is not all. The two brethren become three, known by the very un-Chaucerian names of Diamond, Triamond, and Priamond, and it is they who win Canace from her brother, Camballo, not he who wins her from them.

Nor can it be denied that even in the execution of this presumed part of Chaucer's design there is not the smallest resemblance to Chaucer. The tone of the 'Fairy Queen' is utterly unlike the tone of the 'Squire's Tale,' though both deal in similar subjects. Beautiful and aerial as is the world into which the one takes you, it is so unlike in every respect the world you leave behind, that the inexperienced senses refuse to perform their office with their usual vigour and precision; a haze seems to envelop every object; the whole

affects you with a sense of unreality : the world of the other, on the contrary, seems after all but the same world, for you never long lose the feel of the firm earth, and, as in the old fable, both poet and reader seem constantly to derive fresh strength and bouyancy from that very circumstance. In a word, Spenser's romance, though built up in a great measure of natural materials, is a highly artificial creation ; Chaucer's Romance is Nature's own. He loves to reveal to you a thousand fresh phases of romantic loveliness—to open to you a thousand beautiful and mysterious paths leading you know not whither, but through some of which he becomes your guide : alas, that so many of them through which he had intended to take us should now remain for ever unexplored !

Let us here compare Spenser's description of the three lovers of Canace with Chaucer's portrait of the Squire himself, who tells the tale :—

Spenser.

Amongst those knights there were three brethren
bold,

Three bolder brethren never were yborn,
Born of one mother in one happy mould,
Born at one burden in one happy morn ;
Thrice happy mother, and thrice happy morn,
That bore three such, three such not to be fond :^{*}
Her name was Agape, whose children wern
All three as one ; the first hight Priamond,
The second Diamond, the youngest Triamond.

Stout Priamond, but not so strong to strike ;
Strong Diamond, but not so stout a knight ;
But Triamond was stout and strong alike :
On horseback used Triamond to fight ;
And Priamond on foot had more delight ;

^{*} Found.

But horse and foot knew Diamond to wield :
 With curtaxe used Diamond to smite,
 And Triamond to handle spear and shield,
 But spear and curtaxe both used Priamond in field.

These three did love each other dearly well,
 And with so firm affection were allied
 As if but one soul in them all did dwell,
 Which did her power into three parts divide ;
 Like three fair branches budding far and wide,
 That from one root derived their vital sap ;
 And like that root, that doth her life divide,
 Their mother was ; and had full blessed hap
 These three so noble babes to bring forth at one
 clap.

Chaucer. 7

There was his son, a young Squiér,
 A lover and a lusty bachelor,
 With lockes curl'd as they were laid in press.
 Of twenty year of age he was, I guess.
 Of his stature he was of even length,
 And wonderly deliver,^a and great of strength.
 And he had been some time in chevachie^b
 In Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardy ;
 And borne him well, as of so little space,
 In hope to standen in his lady's grace.

Embroidered was he, as it were a mead,
 All full of freshe flow'res, white and red.
 Singing was he, or fluting all the day :
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown, with sleevès long and wide.
 Well could he sit on horse, and faire ride.
 He coude songès make, and well indite,
 Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray and write.
 So hot he lovèd, that by nightertale^c
 He slept no more than doth the nightingale.

^a Active, nimble.

^b A military expedition.

^c Night time.

Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,
And carv'd before his father at the table.

Are not both these passages very beautiful?—are they not utterly unlike? How dreamy is the one, how full of waking, robust life the other! There may be flesh and blood beneath those three graceful but somewhat shadowy forms, but as to Chaucer's Squire—the very doubt makes one smile. We know him as well as if we were his personal every-day acquaintances. On turning to the page that restores him to us after a momentary absence, we perceive him to be as surely present as if the warm pressure of his hand had not yet past from our own.

But perhaps the most remarkable of all the passages in the 'Fairy Queen' is that in which Spenser says of the 'Squire's Tale'—

But wicked Time, that all good thoughts doth waste,
And works of noblest wits to naught outwear,
That famous monument hath quite defaced.

What does this mean? We know not, but perhaps may learn when we can solve another problem—namely, why these lovely lines of

Chaucer,

Love *will not* be constrained by mastery!
When mastery cometh the God of Love anon
Beateth his wings, and farewell, he is gone!

were altered into the following by

Spenser.

Ne may Love be compelled by mastery,
For, soon as mastery comes, sweet Love anon
Taketh his nimble wings, and soon away is gone!

We must give yet another illustration of the

effects of the substitution of habitual praise for habitual study of the great founder of our literature. That the 'Squire's Tale,' unfinished as it is, is a poem unequalled in its kind,—that it is, in feeling, power, and almost in effect, the most perfect of compositions, notwithstanding its incompleteness, are facts upon which all poetic minds have long been agreed; how then is it that of the hosts who have written upon this tale, not one, so far as we are aware, has ever exhibited the slightest consciousness that even in this broken coronal of precious gems there is enshrined a still costlier one—the Story of the Falcon? We have elsewhere pointed out that Mr. Cowden Clarke, in his prose 'Tales from Chaucer,' 1833, observes—"If the whole of this portion of the story were transposed into prose, it would, I fear, prove uninteresting to the young reader. The original is clothed in *nervous and beautiful verse*, and will, at some future time, amply reward the youthful, imaginative mind, that has overcome the not arduous toil of comprehending freely the quaint and unfortunately obsolete dialect of this very great and beautiful poet." Two years later, while giving the poetical 'Riches of Chaucer,' in their own poetical shape, to the public, and thus practically proving to many a grateful reader that their "dialect" was anything but "obsolete," Mr. Clarke writes upon this same portion of the 'Squire's Tale,' "The deserted fair one being somewhat prolix, and withal not interesting in her complaint, we will, with the reader's consent, pass on to the conclusion of the *Tale*." Now we must be excused, if we not only prefer the earlier to the later estimate of the passage in question, but add that, in our opinion,

"the nervous and beautiful verse" is but the medium through which is conveyed the *most exquisitely pathetic description ever given to the world of a devoted and unrequited love*. We know nothing of a similar kind that can be even compared with it. There are single lines in this complaint (so marvellously misunderstood and neglected) that express more than many books that have taken the same subject for their theme. Here is one such line—

My will became his will's instrument.

One would have thought it would have been impossible to have read the first half-dozen lines without seeing that it is no bird, but one of the most trusting of human beings that has been deceived; and that the transmigration into the falcon is but a part of the fairy machinery of the Tale, and *probably only a temporary transformation*.

Since this passage was written, we have learnt that Mr. Leigh Hunt, the best of Chaucerian critics, had before pointed out the probability that the "falcon was a human being in a temporary state of metamorphosis, a circumstance very common in tales of the East;" but even he, with an eye and heart ever open to the subtlest of poetic beauties, has nothing more to say upon this portion of the Tale. Let us, however, for a moment recall some of its passages; let us forget the bird, and think it is some human heart crying out from the depth of its anguish, and telling its whole story to a listener who is ready to share and if possible alleviate its griefs; let us, in a word, understand that it is a woman, the daughter haply of some prince or king, who says

There I was bred—alas that ilke day !—
 And fostered in a *home* of marble grey
 So tenderly that nothing ailed me.
 I ne wist not what was adversity.

Let us also understand the true human character of
 him who dwelled

me faste by ;

That seemèd well of alle gentleness,
 All were he full of treason and falsenés,
 It was so wrappèd under humble cheer,
 And under hue of truth in such mannére,
 Under pleasánce, and under busy pain,

(or trouble to serve her),

That no wight could have ween'd he coulede feign,
 So deep in grain he dyèd his colours,
 Right as a serpent hideth him under flowers,
 Till he may see his timè for to bite.

The simple, credulous, unsuspecting heart

too piteous and too nice,

All innocent of his *crown'd malíce*,
 For feare of his death

granted him the love he sought. And then

This tiger full of doubleneas

Fell on his kneës with so great humbléas,
 With so high reverence, as by his cheer,*
 So like a gentle lover by mannére,
 So ravish'd as it seemèd for the joy ;

that

His manner was a heaven for to see
 To any woman were she never so wise.

How could such a one be loved too well?
 "Shortly," says she, "so far

* As was exhibited by his cheer or behaviour.

this thing is went
That my will was his will's instrument."

For a year or two all goes well. But a time comes that he must leave her. It is no question what was her sorrow. But when she saw his hue, and heard his words, she believed he felt as much as herself, and that somewhat consoled her. Then, too, she reasoned that it was necessary for his honour to go away, but that he would soon return. So she made a virtue of necessity. "As I best might," she says, "I hid from him my sorrow," and, taking him by the hand at parting, said

"Lo, I am your's all,
 Both such as I have been to you, and shall.
 What he answer'd it needeth not rehearse, '
Who can say bet' than he, who can do worse,
When he hath all well said then hath he done."

He departs—forgets her—and (the old story) loves another.

Does Chaucer leave the Tale finally here? One might have supposed so, from the strange neglect with which this part has been treated, and from the very general misapprehension that exists as to its being merely a bird's history that is narrated? On the contrary, the poet expressly tells us that he shall have to say

How that this falcon gat her love again,
 Repentant as the story telleth us,
 By mediation of Camballus,
 The king's son.

Surely, as one considers all these acts of commission or omission on the part of Chaucer's most eminent admirers, we cannot but perceive the existence of the error we have endeavoured to point

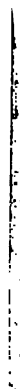
out—too much talk about Chaucer—too little study of him. We may add also that the same consideration helps to give new significancy to Milton's words, and that if we are to have the 'Squire's Tale' ever completed, we must indeed

Call up him that left half told

The story of Cambúscan bold :

lines, by the way, that themselves help to support the point we have endeavoured to develop in these remarks, for even Milton could not leave Chaucer unaltered as we should expect to see Milton left by one of his admirers—Cambuscán becomes here changed to Cambúscan, with no improvement of the original.

HE FRANKLIN'S TALE.





THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

These olde gentle Bretons in their days
Of diverse adventures maden lays,

composed

in their firste Breton tongue ;
Which layes, with their instruments, they sung,
Or elles readen them for their pleasance ;
And one of them have I in remembrance,
Which I shall say with good will as I can.

ut, sirs, because I am unlearned,

At my beginning first I you beseech
Have me excused of my rude speech :
I learned never rhetoric certain ;
Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain :
I slept never on the mount of Parnaso,
Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Colours ne know I none, withouten dread,
But such colours as growen in the mead,
Or elles such as men dye with or paint ;
Colours of rhetoric be to me quaint ;
My spirit feeleth not of such matiere :
But if you wot, my tale shall ye hear.

In Armorica, that is called Bretagne, there was
knight who loved, and who took great pains

· P Strange..

To serve a lady in his beste wise ;
 And many a labour, many a great emprise,⁹
 He for his lady wrought ere she were won,
 For she was one the fairest under sun ;

and also sprung from so high a kindred, that this knight for dread hardly durst

Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress.
 But at the last she for his worthiness,

and especially for his meek obedience, hath caught so great a pity of his suffering, that privately she agreed with him to take him for her husband and her lord—of such lordship as men have over their wives. And in order that they might live the more blissful,

Of his free will he swore her, as a knight,¹⁰
 That never in all his life, ne day nor night,

would he take upon him any mastery against her will ; neither would he show himself to her as jealous, but obey her, and follow her will in all things as any lover may do to his lady. Except that to avoid shame to his rank¹ he would have the name of sovereignty. She thanked him ; and with full great humility, said,—" Sir, since of your gentleness

Ye profferen me to have so large a rein,

I would to God that never betwixt us two, through my guilt, there were either war or strife.

Sir, I will be your humble true wife,
 Have here my truth, till that mine hearte brest."
 Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.

⁹ Undertaking.

¹ " For shame of his degree."

One thing, sirs, I dare safely say, that friends, if they would long hold company, must obey each other.

Love will not be constrain'd by mastery :
 When mast'ry cometh, the god of love anon
 Beateth his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
 Love is a thing, as any spirit, free.
 Women of kind desiren liberty,
 And not to be constrained as a thrall ;
 And so do men, if soothly I say shall.
 Look, who that is most patient in love ;
 He is at his advantage all above.

Patience is certainly a high virtue ; for it van-
 uisheth, as these clerks say,

Things that rigour never should attain.
 For every word men may not chide or 'plain.

Learn to suffer, or, may I fare well, ye *shall* learn
 whether ye will or no ;

For in this world certain no wight there is
 That he ne doth or say'th sometimes amiss.
 Ire, sickness, or constellation,
 Wine, woe, or changing of complexiōn,
 Causeth full oft to do amiss or spoken :
 On every wrong a man may not be wreaken.

According to the time, every one must be tem-
 perate who possesses self-government. And there-
 fore hath this wise and worthy knight, in order to
 live in ease, promised her sufferance.

And she to him full wisely 'gan to swear,
 That never should there be default in her.

Here may men see an humble wise accord :
 Thus hath she take her servant and her lord,
 Servant in love, and lord in marriage ;
 Then was he both in lordship and servage ?
 Servage ! nay, but in lordship all above,
 Since he hath both his lady and his love :

His lady certes, and his wife also,
 The which that law of love accordeth to.
 And when he was in this prosperity,
 Home with his wife he go'th to his country,
 Not far from Penmark, there his dwelling was,
 Whereas he liveth in bliss and in soláce.

Who coude tell (but he had wedded be)
 The joy, the ease, and the prosperity
 That is betwixt a husband and his wife?

This blissful existence lasteth a year and more;
 until the knight of which I speak, who was called
 Arviragus, prepared himself to go and dwell a year
 or two in England, that was also called Bretagne,
 to seek worship and honour in arms (for all his
 pleasure was set on such labour), and there he
 dwelt two years: thus saith the book.

Now will I stint of this Arviragus,
 And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
 That loveth her husband as her heart's life.
 For his absence weepeth she and siketh,*
 As do these noble wivès when them liketh.
 She mourneth, waketh, wailleth, fasteth, 'plaineth,
 Desire of his preséncé her so distraineth†
 That all this widè world she set at nought.
 Her friendès, which that knew her heavy thought,
 Comforten her in all that e'er they may;
 They preachen her, they tell her night and day
 That causèless she slay'th herself, alas!
 And every comfort possible in this case
 They do to her with all their business,
 All for to make her leave her heaviness.

By process, as ye knowen every one,
 Men may so longè graven in a stone
 Till some figure therein imprinted be:
 So long have they comforted her, till she

* Sigheth.

† Seizeth, takes possession of.

Received hath, by hope and by reason,
 The imprinting of their consolation,
 Through which her greatè sorrow 'gan assuage :
 She may not alway 'duren in such rage.
 And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
 Hath sent his letters home of his welfare,
 And that he will come hastily again,
 Or elles had this sorrow her hearte slain.

Her friendès saw her sorrow 'gan to slack,
 And prayden her on knees, for Goddès sake,
 To come and roamen in their company,
 Away to drive her darke fantasy :
 And, finally, she granted that request,
 For well she saw that it was for the best.

Now stood her castle faste by the sea,
 And often with her friendès walkèd she,

to amuse herself on the high bank, where she saw
 many a ship and barge

Sailing their course, where as them list to go :
 But then was that a parcel of her woe ;
 For to herself full oft " Alas ! " said she,
 " Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
 Will bringen home my lord ?

Then were my heart healed of all its bitter and sore
 pains."

Another timè would she sit and think,
 And cast her eyen downward from the brink ;
 But when she saw the grisly rockès black,
 For very fear so would her hearte quake,
 That on her feet she might her not sustain :
 Then would she sit adown upon the green,
 And piteously into the sea behold,
 And say right thus, with careful sikes^a cold :

" Eternal God ! that through thy púrveyance
 Leadest this world by certain governance ;

^a Sighs.



In idle, as men say, ye nothing make :
 But, Lord ! these grisly fiendly rockès black !
 That seemen rather a foul confusion
 Of work than any fair creation
 Of such a perfect wisè God and stable ;
 Why have ye wrought this work unreasonable ?
 For by this work north, south, ne west, ne east,
 There n' is yfoster'd man, ne bird, ne beast ;
 It doth no good to my wit but annoyeth.
 See ye not, Lord ! how mankind it destroyeth ?
 A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
 Have rockès slain, all be they not in mind,
 Which mankind is so fair part of thy work,
 Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.
 Then seemeth it ye had great charity
 Toward mankind ; but how then may it be
 That ye such meanès make it to destroyen,
 Which meanès do no good, but ever annoyen ?

know well, clerks will say as they please by arguments that all is for the best, though I cannot now the causes. But that God that made the wind to blow, now preserve my lord : this is my conclusion ; I leave all disputes to clerks. But would to God that all these black rocks were unkn into hell for his sake.

These rockès slay mine hearte for the fear."
 Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.

Her friends saw that it was no diversion, but a discomfort, to her to roam by the sea ; so they arranged to play somewhere else. They lead her by rivers and by springs, and also in other delightful places.

They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.
 So on a day, right in the morrow tide,
 Unto a garden that was there beside,
 In which that they had made their ordinance

Of victaille and of other purveyance,
 They go and play them all the longe day ;
 And this was on the sixte morrow of May ;
 Which May had painted with his softe showers,
 This garden full of leavès and of flowers ;
 And craft of mannès hand so curiously
 Arrayèd had this garden truèly,
 That never was there garden of such price,
 But if it were the very Paradise.
 The odour of flow'res and the freshe sight
 Would have ymakèd any hearte light
 That ever was born, but if too great sicknéss
 Or too great sorrow held it in distress,
 So full it was of beauty and pleasánce.

And after dinner gonnen they to dance
 And sing also, save Dorigen alone,
 Which made alway her còmplaint and her moan,
 For she ne saw him on the dancè go
 That was her husband, and her love also.
 But natheless she must a time abide,
 And with good hopè let her sorrow slide.

Upon this dance, amongès other men,
 Danced a squiér before Dorigen,
 That fresher was and jollier of array,
 As to my doom,* than is the month of May.
 He singeth, danceth, passing any man
 That is or was since that the world began.
 Therewith he was, if men should him describe,"
 One of the beste faring men alive ;
 Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich and wise,
 And well beloved and holden in great prize.

And shortly, if I shall tell the truth, this lusty
 squire, servant to Venus, who was called Aurelius,
 hath loved Dorigen best of any creature two years
 and more, as it happened, she knowing nothing
 at all of the matter. He durst never tell her what
 grieved him,

* Judgment.

" Describe.

Withouten cup he drank all his penance.
 He was in despair. He durst say nothing; save
 he would somewhat in his songs betray his woe in
 kind of general complaining.

He said he loved, and was belov'd nothing;
 Of such mattèrè made he many lays,
 Songès, complaintès, roundels, virelayes;
 How that he durste not his sorrow tell,
 But languisheth, as doth a fury in hell;
 And die he must, he said, as did Echó
 For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.

In other manner than this he durst not betray his
 grief, except that perchance sometimes at dances,
 here young folk keep up their customs,

It may well be, he looked on her face,
 In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
 But nothing wiste she of his intent.

Nevertheless, it happened before they departed, be-
 cause he was her neighbour, and a man of honour
 and worship, and had known him of old, they fell
 into speech; and from that time Aurelius drew
 nearer and nearer to his purpose. And when he
 saw his time, he said thus:—

“Madame,” quoth he, “by God that this world
 made,

So that I wist it might your hearte glad,
 I would that day that your Arviragus
 Went over sea, that I, Aurelius,
 Had wente there I should never come again;
 For well I wot my service is in vain,
 My guerdon n’ is but bursting of mine heart,
 Madame, rueth upon my painès smart,
 For with a word ye may me slay or save,
 Here at your feet, God would that I were grave.*

* Buried.



have no opportunity to say more. Have mercy, weet, or you will cause me to die."

She 'gan to look upon Aurelius :

"Is this your will (quoth she), and say ye thus ?

Never erst (quoth she) ne wist I what ye meant :

But now, Aurelie, I know your intent,

By thilke God that gave me soul and life,

Ne shall I never be an untrue wife,

In word, ne work. As far as I have wit,

I will be his to whom that I am knit :

Take this for final answer as of me."

But after that, in play, thus saide she :

Aurelie (quoth she), by high God above,

Yet will I granten you to be your love,

(Since I you see so piteously complain)

Looke what day that endelong Bretagne

Ye rémove all the rockès, stone by stone,

That they ne letten^r ship ne boat to gone ;

I say, when ye have made the coast so clean

Of rockès, that there n' is no stone yseen,

Then will I love you best of any man,

Have here my truth, in all that ever I can ;

For well I wot that it shall never betide :

Let suche folly out of your hearte glide."

. . . Aurelius sigheth sore.

"Is there no other grace in you ?" quoth he,

"No, by that lord (quoth she), that makèd me."

Sore was Aurelius when he heard this ; and he answered with a sorrowful heart : "Madame, this ere an impossibility. Then must I die suddenly horrible death." And with that word he turned way.

There came of other friends many a one, and ramed up and down the alleys, and knew nothing of this conclusion, but suddenly began

' Hinder.

the revel anew,
 Till that the brighte sun had lost his hue,
 For the horizon had reft the sun his light;
 This is as much to say as it was night.
 And home they go in mirth and in soláce;
 Save only wretched Aurelius, alas!
 He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
 He saith, he may not from his death astart,
 Him seemeth that he felt his hearte cold.
 Up to the heaven his handès 'gan he hold,
 And on his kneës bare he set him down,
 And in his raving said his orisoun.

For very woe he went out of his senses. He
 not what he spake, but thus he said :—With pi
 heart he hath begun to complain to the god
 first unto the sun :—

“ Apollo, god and governor
 Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flower,

that giveth, in accordance with his declinati
 each of them his season and time, as that thy
 ing-place changeth low and high—Lord Pl
 cast thy eye of mercy on wretched Aurelius
 am but lost.

Lo, lord, my lady hath my death ysworn
 Withouten guilt, but * thy benignity
 Upon my deadly heart have some pity;
 For well I wot, Lord Phœbus, if you lest,
 Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.
 Now vouchèsafe, that I may you devise
 How that I may be help, and in what wise.

Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen,
 That of the sea is chief goddèss and queen,
 Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,
 Yet empèress aboven him is she;

* Except.

Ye know well, lord, that right as her desire
 Is to be quicked and lighted of your fire,
 For which she followeth you full busily ;
 Right so the sea desireth naturally
 To followen her, as she that is goddées
 Both in the sea and rivers more and less.

Wherefore, Lord Phœbus, this is my request: do
 this miracle, or let my heart burst. At the very
 next opposition of the heavenly bodies in the sign
 of the Lion,

pray her so great a flood to bring,
 That five fathom at the least it overspring
 The highest rock in Armoric Bretagne,
 And let this flood endure yearès twain ;
 Then certes to my lady may I say,
 Holdeth your hest,* the rockès be away.

Lord Phœbus, do this miracle for me. Pray her
 that she go no faster in her course than ye ; . . .

Then shall she be even at full alway,
 And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.

And but she vouchsafe in such manner to grant
 me my sovereign and dear lady,

Pray her to sinken every rock adown
 Into her owen darke regioun
 Under the ground, there Pluto dwelleth in,
 Or never more shall I my lady win.

Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek :
 Lord Phœbus ! see the tearès on my cheek,
 And on my pain have some compassioun."
 And with that word in sorrow he fell adown,
 And longe time he lay forth in a trance.

His brother, who knew of his suffering, caught
 him up, and brought him to bed. Despairing in
 this torment, and in this thought,

* Promise.

Ne gladly for that sum he would not gone.

Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answerèd thus ; " Fie on a thousand pound !
This wiðe world, which that men say is round,
I would it give, if I were lord of it.

This bargain is completed, for we are agreed. By my truth ye shall be paid truly. But look ye, that from no negligence or sloth ye delay us here longer than the morrow." " Nay," quoth the clerk, " have here my faith in pledge."

To bed goes Aurelius when it so pleased him,

And well nigh all that night he had his rest.

What for his labour and his hope of bliss,

his woeful heart had a relief of its pain. Upon the morrow, when it was day, they took the nearest road to Bretagne,— Aurelius, and the magician beside him, and they descended from their horses at the place where they desired to stay.

And this was, as the bookès me remember,

The colde frosty season of December.

Phœbus wax'd old and huèd like latón,^b

That in his hote declination

Shone as the burnish'd gold with streamès bright ;

But now in Capricorn adown he light,

Whereas he shone full pale, I dare well sain.

The bitter froste with the sleet and rain

Destroyèd hath the green in every yard ;

Janus sits by the fire with double beard,

And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine ;

Before him stands brawn of the tuskèd swine,

And " Nowel ! " ⁱ crieth every lusty man.

Aurelius in all that ever he can,

Doth to his master cheer and reverence,

And prayeth him to do his diligence,

^b A dull-looking lead-like metal.

ⁱ Christmas : from the French Noël.

To bringen him out of his painès smart,
Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.

This subtle clerk such ruth hath on this man,
That night and day he speedeth him that he can
To wait a time of his conclusion ;
This is to say, to make illusion,
By such an apparence or jugglery,
(I can no termès of astrology)
That she and every wight should ween and say,
That of Bretagne the rockès were away,
Or elles they were sunken under ground.
So at the last he hath his time yfound
To make his japès^j and his wretchedness
Of such a superstitious cursedness.
His tables Tolitanes forth he brought,
Full well corrected, that there lackèd nought,
Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,
Neither his rootès nor his other gears,
As be his centres and his arguments,
And his proportional convenients
For his equations in every thing :
And by his eighte spheres in his working.

He knew full well how far Alnath^k was pushed
From the head of that fixed Aries above,

^j Tricks.

^k The first star in the house of Aries. In 'Chaucer Modernized,' by R. H. Horne and others, there is a curious note on the above passage, supplied by the late John Varley, the accomplished water-colour painter, who was a firm believer in astrology. Thus it runs:—"In the time of Chaucer, the knowledge of the particular degrees of each sign occupying the cusp, or entrance, of the twelve horoscopal houses, was extremely incorrect. The old tables have been abandoned by modern astrologers (among whom there are several credit students in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge), and are, of course, replaced by perfect tables. The extent of the error may be seen by the computations of Lilly, the celebrated astrologer of King Charles the First's time, (who received a grant of a hundred pounds a year from the Par-

And knew also his other observances
For such illusions and such mischances

liament); and yet these Lilly tables are now without correction, though corrected copies are chased cheaply. The errors ascribed to the sci- truth the errors of calculation. As for the mode adopted by the 'clerk' in this poem, we know Moon rules in Cancer,—there she has her mans dignities,—and Cancer represents the ocean in horoscope. If the poet has a latent and secondary then Cancer, in the *mysteries*, is also the place Neptune is public opinion. So far we may 'clerk;' but he subsequently shows himself to be and not a worker by regular natural science. He with fixed substances, instead of keeping to calculate abstract ordinances. For nonentities (in the advances of science) have as much power as science. What is the meridian but a nonentity? Yet this changes the signification of all planetary bodies. Tolitian tables, constructed by order of Alphonsus Naples, it does not appear that Chaucer knew are they valuable for correctness. But when a commentator on Chaucer, Mr. Tyrwhitt, un- prove that the poet, in the opening of his great

As heathen folk usèd in thilke ^a days ;
 For which no longer maketh he delays,
 But through his magic, for a day or tway,
 It seemèd all the rockès were away.

Aurelius, who is in doubt whether he shall have his love, or fare but ill, awaiteth night and day for the miracle. And when he knew that there was no obstable—that the rocks had disappeared every one, he fell anon down at his master's feet, and said—

“ I, woful wretch, Aurelius,
 Thank you, my lord, and lady mine Venús,
 That me have holpen from my carès cold ;”
 And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
 Thereas^o he knew he should his lady see.
 And when he saw his time, anon right he,
 With dreadful ^p heart, and with full humble cheer,
 Saluted hath his sovereign lady dear.

“ My rightful lady,” quoth this woful man,
 “ Whom I most dread and love as I best can,
 And loathest were of all this world displease,
 N[']ere it^q that I for you have such disease
 That I must die here at your foot anon,
 Nought would I tell how me is woe-begone.
 But certes either must I die or 'plain ;
 Ye slay me guiltèless for very pain.
 But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
 Adviseth you ere that you break your truth :
 Repenteth you, for thilke God above,
 Ere ye me slay, because that I you love ;
 For, madam, well ye wot what ye have hight ;^r
 Not that I challenge anything of right
 Of you my sovereign lady, but of grace ;
 But in a garden yond', in such a place,

^a Those.

^o Where.

^q Were it not.

^p Full of dread.

^r Promised.

Ye wot right well what ye behighten^a me,
 And in mine hand your truthe pligh^ten ye
 To love me best: God wot ye sayèd so,
 Although that I unworthy be thereto.
 Madame, I speak it for the honour of you,
 More than to save my heartès life right now,
 I have done so as ye commanded me;
 And if ye vouchèsafe ye may go see.
 Do as you list, have your behest in mind,
 For quick or dead, right there^t ye shall me find.
 In you lieth all to do me live or dey,
 But well I wot the rockès be away."
 He taketh his leave, and she astonish'd stood;
 In all her facè n' as one drop of blood:
 She weenèd never have come in such a trap.
 "Alas!" quoth she, "that ever this should hap'!
 For weened I never by possibility
 That such a monster or marvaille might be;
 It is against the process of nature;"
 And home she go' th a sorrowful créature.

For very fear, she can hardly go. For a day or
 two she continues to weep and wail, and to sorrow,
 that it was piteous to see,

But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
 For out of town was gone Arviragus;
 But to herself she spoke, and sayèd thus,
 With facè pale, and with full sorry cheer,
 In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.

"Alas!" quoth she, "on thee, Fortúne, I 'plain,
 That únware hast me wrappèd in thy chain,
 From which to scapen wot I no succour
 Save only death or elles díshonour:
 One of these two behoveth me to choose.
 But natheless, yet had I lever^u lose
 My life, than of my body have a shame,
 Or know myselven false, or lose my name:

^a Promised. ^t Right in that matter.

^u Rather.

And with my death I may be quit ywis;
 Hath there not many a noble wife ere this,
 And many a maid, yslain herself, alas!
 Rather than with her body do trespass?"

Thus 'plained Dorigen a day or tway,
 Purposing ever that she woulde dey;
 But nathèless upon the thirde night
 Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
 And asked her why that she wept so sore?
 And she 'gan weepen ever longer the more.

"Alas," quoth she, "that ever I was born!
 Thus have I said," quoth she, "thus have I sworn;"
 And told him all, as ye have heard before:
 It needeth not rehearse it you no more.

This husband with glad cheer, in friendly wise,
 Answer'd and said as I shall you devise:
 "Is there ought ellès, Dorigen, but this?"
 "Nay, nay," quoth she, "God help me so, as wis,
 This is too much, and it were Goddès will."

"Yea, wife," quoth he "let sleepen that is still;
 It may be well parádvventure yet to-day,
 Ye shall your truthe holden by my fay:"
 For God so wisely have mercy on me
 I had well lever^u stickèd for to be,
 For very love which that I to you have,
 But if^x ye should your truthe keep and save;
 Truth is the highest thing that man may keep;"—
 But with that word he burst anon to weep,
 And said, "I you forbid, on pain of death,
 That never while you lasteth life or breath,
 To no wight tell ye this misádvventure;
 As I may best I will my woe endure;
 Ne make no countenance of heaviness
 That folk of you may deemen harm or guess."

And he called forth a squire and a maiden. "Go

^v Or, in other words,— "And if it were but God's will it
 might be otherwise." ^w Faith. ^x That.

forth," he said, "anon with Dorigen, and bri
to such a place immediately."

They take their leave, and on their way the;
But they ne wisten why she thither went;
She n'oulde no wight tellen her intent.

This squire, which that was called Aureliu
that soloved Dorigen, happened by chance to m
in the town, in the nearest street, as she was
to go the way towards the garden, where sh
given her promise. And he went towards the
also. For he saw well when she would go
her house to any kind of place; but there th
through adventure and favour, and he salute
with glad intent, and asketh her whither she

And she answered, half as she were mad,
"Unto the garden, as mine husband bade,
My truthe for to hold, alas! alas!"

Aurelius 'gan wonder on this case,
And in his heart had great compassion
Of her, and of her lamentation,
And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
That bade her holden all that she had hight,
So loth him was his wife should break her tr
And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,
Considering the best on every side,
That from his lust yet were him lever abide,
Than do so high a churlish wretchedness
Against franchise^a and alle gentleness;
For which in fewe wordès said he thus:

"Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That since I see the greäte gentleness
Of him, and eke I see well your distress,

^y This expression is in common use to this day in
"Where's t' bound?" is there heard much more fre
than "Where are you going?"

^z Promised. ^a The spirit or dignity of freed

That him were lever have shame (and that were
ruth)

Than ye to me should broken thus your truth,

I had well lever ever to sufferen woe,

Than to depart the love betwixt you two.

I you release, Madáme; into your hond

Quit every surément and every bond

That ye have made to me as herebeforn,

Since thilke timè that ye were yborn.

I have here my truth, I shall never reprove you for
my promise; and here I take my leave—

As of the truest and the beste wife

That ever yet I knew in all my life.

But let every wife beware of her promise, remembering, at least, upon Dorigen. Thus, without doubt, a squire can do a gentle deed as well as a knight."

She thanketh him upon her kneës bare,

And home unto her husband is she fare,

And told him all as ye have heard me said,^b

And, trustest me, he was so well apaid,

That it were impossible me to write.

Why should I longer tell of this case? Arviragus and Dorigen, his wife, lead forth their lives in sovereign bliss. Never again was there anger between them.

He cherished her as though she were a queen,

And she was to him true for evermore :

Of these two folk ye get of me no more.

Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorn,

Curseth the time that ever he was born.

"Alas!" quoth he, "alas! that I behight,^c

Of pure gold a thousand pound of weight,

Unto this philosopher! how shall I do?

^b Say.

^c Promised.

I see no more but that I am undone :—

Mine heritagè must I needès sell,
And be a beggar ; here I will not dwell,
And shamen all my kindred in this place,
But^d I of him may getten better grace ;
But nathèless I will of him essay,
At certain dayès, year by year, to pay,
And thank him of his greate courtesy ;
My truthe will I keep ; I will not lie."

With hearte sore he go'th unto his coffer,
And broughte gold unto this philosópher,
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,
And him beseecheth of his gentleness
To grant him dayès of^e the remenant,
And saide : " Master, I dare well make avaunt,
I failèd never of my truth as yet ;
For sikerly^f my debte shall be quit
Towardès you, how so that e'er I fare,
To go a begging in my kirtle bare :
But would ye vouchensafe upon surety,
Two years or three for to respiten me,
Then were I well, for elles must I sell
Mine heritage ; there is no more to tell."

This philosópher soberly answér'd,
And sayèd thus, when he these wordès heard :
" Have I not holden covenant to thee ?"

" Yea, certes, well and truely," quoth he.

" Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liketh ?"

" No, no," quoth he, and sorrowfully he siketh,^g

" What was the causè ? tell me, if thou can."

Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before ;
It needeth not rehearse it any more.

He said, " Arviragus, of his gentleness, had rather
die in wretchedness and sorrow, than that his wife
were false of her troth." He told him all the

^d Unless.

^f Certainly.

^e For.

^g Sigheth.

f Dorigen ; how loth she was to be a
ife, and that she had rather that day have
at she had in innocence sworn her troth,
ad never heard speak of magical appear-
That," quoth he, "made me have such
of her—

right as freely as he sent her to me,
eely sent I her to him again.

ie whole, there is no more to say."
ilosopher answered, "Dear brother, each
haved with gentleness to the other. Thou
ire, and he is a knight ; let God, of his
ower, forbid but that a clerk could do a
æd as well as any of you. There is
of that. Sir, I release thee of thy thou-
nd as completely as though thou wert but
ot out of the earth, and haddest never
own me :—

sir, I will not take a penny of thee
ll my craft, ne nought for my traváille ;
hast ypayed well for my victaílle :
nough, and farewell, have good day."

ook his horse, and goes forth on his road.
gs, this question I would now ask, Which
lost liberal, think you?

REMARKS ON THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

WHEN the young author of 'Troilus and Criseyde' was casting about in his thoughts to see what he should say of his friend and fellow literary labourer Gower, to whom and to the "philosophical Study" he wished to dedicate it, we can readily imagine the difficulty that beset him; for it is one that besets all who may have occasion to show respect for men possessing more ambition than ability, and who owe to the accidents of social position, period, &c., a reputation they could not otherwise obtained. The *poetical* Gower? Chaucer could not say *that* of his friend; reversing the old fable, turned everything he tried to lead. The *pathetic* Gower? The idler rather calculated to call up a smile, than to remind him of any of those "unbidden gushes" that come and anon spring forth amid the rocks and crannies of life at the poet's touch. The *sublime* Gower? Alas! Chaucer would feel, if he did not think, that he was getting very near to the ridiculous. He might have certainly called *learned* Gower, which would have been great a compliment as to call a literate man of our own day the educated; so common and extensive learning then among the writers. There wanted something more sonorous and imposing, and yet that much or little, according to the views of the world. Ha! the *moral* Gower?

There is no doubt the good man meant well. Undoubtedly a very moral Gower. The adopted the phrase.

It is the strength and vitality of the true, lackness of the seeming poet, that while not a single reader who glances over it will remember a line, or a thought, and by Gower, in all his works, there are very few persons who are not familiar with

The black-letter fly has come safe in Chaucer's amber.

As we could be content to let him rest, there are not considerations of the highest involved in the question—What value is to be added to this word, Moral? What was the notion of morality? What was Chaucer's? Through the periods of the world's recorded history (if we take the very remote and dark ones, of which we know so little to make it worth while to take account), we find traces of the essential guiding principles of religion, philosophy, poetry, around which cling hosts of notions that do change from age to age, and are therefore to be esteemed as non-essential. Chaucer will generally be looked upon in his own age as a truly moral writer who most successfully conveys the notions rather than the principles; as a moral writer for all time, we take it, he has prescribed the procedure. Thus in part, we may be explained the fact that Gower's poems have fallen into dusty oblivion, while Chaucer's is awakening the hearts and minds of the people, at least among his countrymen, and even where the more direct channels of communication, of the hearts and minds of all the



THE PARDONER'S TALE.

rdings," quoth the Pardoner,

"in church when I preach,
aine^b me to have a haughty speech,
d ring it out, as round as go'th a bell,
I can all by rote that I tell.

theme is alway one, and ever was ;
dis malorum est cupiditas.

irst I pronouncè whennes that I come,
l then my bullès show I all and some ;
liegè lordès seal on my patént,
show I first my body to warrént,
no man be so bold, ne priest, ne clerk,
o disturb of Christès holy work ;
after that, then tell I forth my tales,
of popès and of cardinales.
triarchs and bishoppès I shew,
a Latín I speak a wordès few

y preaching,ⁱ and to guide men to de-

ow I forth my longe crystal stones,
ied full of cloutès and of bones,
hey be, as weenen they each one,^j
have I in latón a shoulder-bone,

^b Take pains.

To saffron with my predication."
As each one weens or believes.

Which that was of a holy Jewès sheep.

Good men, say I, take of my wordès keep,
If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxè swell,
That any worm hath eat, or worm ystung,
Take water of that well, and wash his tongue,
And it is whole anon; and, furthermore,
Of pockès, and of scab, and every sore,
Shall every sheep be whole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught: take keep of that I tell.

If that the good man that owneth the beasts
every week before cock-crowing,—

Fasting, ydrinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our elders taught,
His beastès and his store shall multiply;
And, sirs, also it hcaeth jealousy;
For though a man be fallen in jealous rage,
Let maken with this water his potágo,
And never shall he more his wife mistrist,*
Though he the sooth of her defaultè wist.

Here is also a mitten that ye may see:—

He that his hand will put in this mittaine,
He shall have multiplying of his grain,
When he hath sowen, be it wheat or oats,
So that he offer pence or ellès groats.

And men and women, one thing warn I you
If any wight be in this churche now,
That hath done sin horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it yshriven be;

Such folk shall have no power ne no grace
To offer to my relics in this place.
And whoso findeth him out of such blame
He will come up and offer in Goddès name,

* Mistrust.

And I assoil him by the authority
Which that by bull ygranted was to me.

By this gaude¹ have I wonnen year by year
A hundred marks, since I was Pardonere.
I stande like a clerk in my pulpét,
And when the lewèd^m people is down yset,
I preache so as ye have heard before,
And tell a hundred falsè japès more.
Then painⁿ I me to stretchen forth my neck,
And east and west upon the people I beck,
As doth a dovè, sitting upon a barn.

His hands and tongue go on so briskly—

That it is joy to see my business.
Of avarice and of such cursedness
Is all my preaching, for to make them free^o
To give their pence, and, namely,^p unto me;
For mine intent is nought but for to win,
And nothing for correction of sin.
I recke never when that they be buried,
Though that their soulès go a blacke buried.^q

certainly many a preaching cometh oft times of
evil intention. Some also

for pleasance of folk, and flattery,
To be advanced by hypocrisy;
And some for vain glory, and some for hate.
For when I dare no other ways debate,
Then will I sting him with my tonguè smart,
In preaching, so that he shall not astart,

¹ Jest, or trick. ^m Ignorant. ⁿ Take pains.

^o Or liberal in their gifts. ^p Especially.

^q The meaning of these words is said to be unknown, beyond their evident general expression of the recklessness of the Pardonere as to the spiritual welfare of those whom he professes to be so anxious about. But it seems to us the usage, their souls go *buried in black*, is a powerful poetical figure for souls lost in the blackness of final guilt and perdition.

To be defamed falsely, if that he
 Hath trespassed, to my brethren or to me ;
 For though I telle not his proper name,
 Men shall well knowen that it is the same,
 By signès, and by other circumstánces ;
 Thus quit I folk, that do us dísplesances ;
 Thus spit I out my venom under hue
 Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
 But shortly mine intent I will devise,
 I preach of nothing but for covetise.^r
 Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
 Thus can I preach against the samè vice
 Which that I use, and that is avarice.
 But though myself be guilty in that sin,

yet can I make other folk to depart from avar

and sorely to repent ;

But that is not my principal intent :
 I preache nothing but for covetise.

Of this matter enough : it ought to suffice.
 Then tell I them many an example,

Of olde stories longe time agone,
 For lewèd^a people loven talès old ;
 Such thingès can they well report and hold.
 What ? trowen ye, that whiles I may preach,
 And winnen gold and silver, for I teach^t
 That I will live in povert^t wilfully ?
 Nay, nay, I thought it never truèly ;
 For I will preach and beg in sundry lands,
 I will not do no labour with mine hands,

nor make baskets for to live thereby, in ord
 prevent me from idly begging. I will count
 none of the apostles.

^r Covetousness. ^a Ignorant. ^t For teaching

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

I will have money, woole, cheese, and wheat,
All were it given of the poorest page,
Or of the poorest widow in a village :
All should her children starven^a for famine ;
Nay ! I will drink the liquor of the vine.

But harkeneth, lordings, in conclusion,
Your liking is that I shall tell a tale,
Now I have drunk a draught of corny ale,
By G— I hope I shall you tell a thing
That shall by reason be at your liking.
For though myself be a full vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellen can,
Which I am wont to preachen, for to win,
Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin :

In Flanders once was a company of young folk
that haunted the ways of folly,

As hazard, riot, stewès, and tavérnes ;
Thereas^b with harpès, lutès, and gittérns,
They dance, and play at dice, both day and night,
And eat also, and drinke ever their might ;
Through which they do the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple, in cursèd wise,
By superfluity abominable.
Their oathès be so greate and so damnable,
That it is grisly^c for to hear them swear ;
Our blissful lordès body they to-tear ;^d
They thought the Jewès rent him not enough ;

each of them laughed at the other's sin. And
n there came in dancing-women, small and well
e, and young female fruit-sellers, singers with
s, . . . sellers of wafer-cakes, that be the very
's officers to blow the fire of lust, that is an-
i unto gluttony. I take the Holy Writ to

^a Perish.

^b Where.

^c Fearful.

An augmentation of the force of the verb, tear.

witness for me that lust is in wine and drunkenness. . . .

O gluttony, full of cursedness ;
 O cause first of our confusion,
 O, original of our damnation,
 Till Christ had bought us with his blood again
 Looketh,^d how dear, shortly for to sayn
 About was thilke cursèd villany ;
 Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.

Adam, our father, and his wife also,
 From Paradise, to labour and to woe,
 Were driven for that vice, it is no drede ;^e
 For while that Adam fasted, as I read,
 He was in Paradise, and when that he,
 Eat of the fruit defendèd^f on a tree,
 Anon he was outcast to care and pain :
 O gluttony, on thee well ought us^g plain.

Oh, did a man know how many maladies
 excess and gluttonies, he would keep more
 measure in his diet, sitting at his table. Alas
 short throat, the tender mouth, make men
 labour East, West, North and South ; in ear
 air, in water,

To get a glutton dainty, meat and drink.

The apostle saith, piteously weeping, “
 walk many, of which I have told you—I say
 weeping with a piteous voice—that they be
 of Christ’s cross, of whom the end is death—
 their God :

O Belly,

How great labour and cost is thee to find !
 These cooks how they stamp, and strain, and
 And turnen substance into accident,
 To fulfil all thy likerous talent.

^d Look.

^e No doubt.

^f Forbidden

ut of the hard bones they knock the marrow, for
 ey cast nought away that may go soft and sweet
 ough the gullet.

Of spicerie, of leaf, of bark, and root,
 Shall be his sauce ymaked by delight,
 To make him yet a newer appetite.

but certainly he that haunteth such delights, who
 veth in such vices, is dead. . . .

Drunkenness is full of striving and wretched-
 ess.

Oh, drunken man, disfigured is thy face ;
 Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace :
 And through thy drunken nose seemeth the soun,
 As though thou saidest aye,—Sampsoún, Sampsoún.
 And yet, God wot, Sampsoún drunk never no wine.
 Thou fallest as it were, a stickèd swine :
 Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure :
 For drunkenness is very sepulture
 Of mannès wit, and his discretion.
 In whom that drink hath domination,

without doubt, he can keep no counsel.

And keep you from the white wine and the red,
 And especially from the whitè wine of Lepe,^h
 That is to sell in Fish-street, and in Cheap.

This Spanish wine creepeth subtly in other wines
 growing close by, of which there riseth such fumes,
 hat when a man hath drinken three draughts, and
 believeth

that he be at home in Cheap,
 He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,

^s Care or business.

^h A place not far from Cadiz, that appears to have been
 distinguished in Chaucer's time for the strength of its wines.

CANTERBURY TALES.

Not at the Róchelle, ne at Bordeaux town,
And thenne will he say, "Sampsouín, Sampsouín."

But harkeneth, lordings, one word, I you pray,
That all the sovereign actès, dare I say,ⁱ
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Through very God, that is Omnipotent,
Were done in abstinence and in prayére.

Look in the Bible; there ye may learn it.

Look,^k Attila, the great conqueror, died in his
sleep, with dishonour and shame. . . . Remember,
too, what was commanded unto Samúel . . . read
the Bible, and see the effects of giving wine to them
that dispense justice. And now that I have spoken
of gluttony, will I forbid hazard to you. Hazard is
the very mother of lies and deceit, and false swear-
ing, and blasphemy, and waste of cattle and of time.
It is the

contrary of honóur,

For to be held a common hazardour;
And ever the higher he is of estate
The morè he is holden desolate.
If that a prince useth hazardry,
In alle governance and policy,
He is, as by common opinion
Yhold the less in reputation.

Stilbon, that was a wise ambassadour,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honóur;
From Calidone, to maken them álliance:
And when he came, it happed him *perchance*

ⁱ I dare affirm.

^k The earliest English writers, and Chaucer among't!
lost no opportunity of displaying their learning, and
thankful, no doubt, their readers were for the inform-
thus afforded. We are not in the same position, and
therefore, ventured to abridge this luxuriance of book-
ledge.

That all the greatest that were of that lond,
 Playing atte hazard he them found.
 For which, as soon as that it mighte be,
 He stole him home again to his country,
 And saide there, "I will not lose my name,
 Ne will not take on me so great defame,
 You for to ally unto some hazardours;
 Lendeth some other wise ambassadours;
 For by my truthe, me were lever die
 Than I you should to hazardours ally.

. Look, how to King Demetrius the King of
 russia sent in scorn a pair of gold dice. . .
 t swearing is also an abominable thing. The
 God forbids it altogether. But now, sirs, I
 tell you forth my tale.

These three rioters, long before the bell rang for
 mass,

Were set them in a tavern for to drink:
 And as they sat, they heard a belle clink
 Before a corpse was carried to his grave:
 That one of them 'gan callen to his knave—

"After go," quoth he, "and ask whose corpse
 it is that passes by here, and look that thou re-
 member his name well." "Sir," quoth the boy, "it
 is never a bit; it was told me two hours be-
 fore he came here. He was, pardie, an old com-
 mon of yours, and he was slain suddenly to-night.
 He sat, from drunkenness, upright on his bench,

There came a privy thief, men clepen Death,
 That in this country all the people slay'eth,
 And with his spear he smote his heart a-two,
 And went his way withouten wordès mo.
 He hath a thousand slain this pestilence:
 And, master, ere ye come in his preséce,
 He thinketh that it were full necessary
 For to beware of such an adversary;

Thou spake right now of thilke traitor Death,
That in this country all our friendès slayth.

Have here my truth, that thou art his spy. Tell
me where he is, or thou shalt abide the conse-
quences,

By God and by the Holy Sacrament ;
For soothly thou art one of his assent
To slay us younge folk, thou falsè thief."

"Now, sirs," quoth he, "if it be so pleasant to
you to find Death,

turn up this crooked way,
For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and there he will abide ;
Ne for your boast he will him nothing hide.
See ye that oak ? right there ye shall him find ;
God savè you that bought again mankind,
And you amend ;" thus said this olde man.
And every of these riotoures ran
Till they came to the tree, and there they found
Of florins fine of gold ycoined round,
Well nigh an eighte bushels, as them thought.
No longer as then after Death they sought,
But each of them so glad was of the sight,
For that the florins be so fair and bright,
That down they set them by the precious hoard.
The worst of them he spake the firste word.

"Brethren," quoth he, "take keep what I shall
say ;

My wit^o is great, though that I bourde^p and play.
This treasure hath fortune unto us given
In mirth and jollity our life to liven,
And lightly as it cometh, so will we spend.
Aye, Goddès precious dignity, who wend^a
To-day, that we should have so fair a grace ?
But might this gold be carried from this place

^o Knowledge. ^p Make fun, from the French. ^a Believed.

Home to mine house, or ellès unto yours,
 (For well I wot that all this gold is ours),
 Thenne were we in high felicity.
 But truëly by day it may not be ;
 Men wouldeñ say that we were thievès strong,

and for our treasure hang us. This treasure must
 be carried by night, as wisely and slyly as possible,
 therefore I advise, that we cast lots among us, and
 see where the lot will fall. And he that hath the
 lot, shall run with blithe heart to the town, and that
 all quickly,

And bring us bread and wine full privily :
 And two of us shall keepen subtilly
 This treasure well ; and if he will not tarry,
 When it is night, we will this treasure carry
 By one assent, whereas^r us thinketh best."

'hen one of them brought the straws in his fist,
 and bade them draw, and look where the lot would
 fall, and it fell on the youngest of them.

And forth toward the town he went anon,
 And all so soone that he was agone,
 That one of them spake thus unto that other :
 " Thou wottest well thou art my sworn brother,
 Thy profit will I tell thee right anon.
 Thou wot'st well that our fellow is agone,
 And here is gold and that full great plenty
 That shall departed^a be among us three.
 But nathèless, if I can shape it so,
 That it departed^a were among us two,
 Had I not done a friendès turn to thee ?"

The other answered, " I n'ot^t how that may be :
 He wot well that the gold is with us tway,
 What shall we do ? what shall we to him say ? "

^r Where.

^a Parted.

^t Know not.

"Shall it be in confidence?" said the first wretch,

"And I shall tellen thee in wordès few
What we shall do, and bring it well about."

"I grante," quoth that other, "out of doubt,
That by my troth I will thee not betray."

"Now," quoth the first, "thou wot'st well we
be tway,

And tway of us shall stronger be than one.

Look, when that he is set, thou right anon

Arise, as though thou would'st with him play,

And I shall rive him through the sidès tway

While that thou strugglest with him as in game;

And with thy dagger look thou do the same;

And then shall all this gold departed^a be,

My deare friend, betwixen thee and me;

Then may we both our lustès all fulfil,

And play at dice right at our owen will."

And thus agreed be these two cursed wretches to
slay the third.

This youngest, which that wente to the town,

Full oft in heart he rolleth up and down

The beauty of these florins new and bright.

"O Lord!" quoth he, "if so were, that I might

Have all this treasure to myself alone,

There is no man that liveth under the throne

Of God, that shoulde live so merry as I."

And at the last, the fiend, our enemy,

Put in this thought that he should poison buy,

With which he mighte slay his fellows tway.

For why? the fiend found him living in such a
manner, that he had leave to bring him to sorrow.

And this was his determined purpose,

To slay them both and never to repent.

And forth he go'th, no longer would he tarry,

Into the town unto a 'pothecary,

^a Parted.

And prayèd him that he him woulde sell
Some poison

at he might exterminate his rats. And also there
as a polecat in his farm yard that he said had slain
s capons, and if he could he would gladly be re-
anged on the vermin that destroyed them by night.

The apothecary answered, "As wisely as may
od save my soul, thou shalt have a thing that
ere is not a living creature in all the world that
ath eaten or drunken of this confection but the
nount of a corn of wheat, that he shall not anon
ive up his life. Yea, he shall perish in less time
an thou wilt go a mile; the poison is so strong
d violent."

This cursed man hath seized in his hand the
oison in a box, and immediately he ran into the
ext street, and borrowed three large bottles, and
e poured the poison into two of them, and kept
ie third clean for his own drink: for all the night
e determined to labour in carrying the gold away
ut of that place.

And when this rioter with sorry grace
Hath filled with wine his greate bottles three,
To his fellows again repaireth he.
What needeth it thereof to sermon more?
For right as they had cast * his death before,
Right so they have him slain, and that anon,
And when that this was done thus spake that one:
"Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
And afterward we will his body bury."
And with that word it happened him *per cas* †
To take the bottle where the poison was
And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,

from which, anon, they both perished.

* *Contrived.*

† *By chance.*

REMARKS ON THE PARDONER'S TALE.

In the story of Death and the Rioters ~~oo~~ another evidence of Chaucer's power of ~~steep~~ the most unfamiliar and difficult subjects in ~~t~~ own kindred hues. As with the chiefactors or m spring of the machinery of the Poem, so wit whole atmosphere—every thing looks natural, explicable upon natural principles; yet you surrounded by strange, solemn, unearthly fluences, that seem to rise far into the regio the supernatural. The surpassing skill with w this is accomplished can only be felt, not descri Yet let us ask, does the poet make the Taveri boy believe Death came bodily, and smote in with his spear the heart of the drunken riote the bench?—or make the Taverner himself lieve Death's bodily habitation is in the villa mile distant, where he hath slain this year

Both man and woman, child, and hind, and pa or make the adventurous rioters expect to encou him face to face? Does he mean that this Man they meet with is really DEATH, who w going about on his terrible mission of giving to others, can find none for himself, and cries with the sublimest pathos,

Ne Death, alas! ne will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a restèless caitiff;
And on the ground which is my mother's gate,
I knocke with my staff, early and late,
And say to her, Levè Mother, let me in?

Is it if this be DEATH, is it he who has laid the snares at the tree's root to entrap the wretched sinners? Who can answer? None of these things is it to be so to support the mere human vitality of the Tale; yet how every line and touch makes us believe the Tale is instinct with a higher life, it opens to us dim, undefinable glimpses of the world beyond, into which its course conducts the mere human and erring actors.

Descending from such speculations, the dramatic construction of this Tale must strike every one. The simplicity and grandeur of design, in the depth of the universality of the sympathies aroused, and in the metaphysic truth and rapidity with which one element springs out of another, each enlarging on its predecessor and hurrying on faster and fiercer to the complete and awful conclusion, it can be looked upon as one of the most perfect works of the kind in existence.

Some people have been foolish and presumptuous enough to think that Chaucer did not know what he was about in the introduction to this Tale. It is improper, say they, to say such a Tale in the mouth of the Pardoner! They forget that it is his business to tell Moral Tales—and that he expressly says he tells all such things by rote. And how artistically, as well as humorously, does Chaucer prepare for this Tale, by making the grasping, ambitious, sensual, shameless vagabond, after revealing in his own self-exposure, begin to lecture his audience upon the wickedness of avarice, drunkenness, and gluttony; even the little lengthening—tediousness—here has its purpose; until the truth at the contrast being, as we may suppose, rally exhausted, the Pardoner, who is used to

laughter and contempt, and "likes it" probably, and at all events is not disconcerted by it—at once launches into his Tale ; which by its own power speedily arrests all hearts and minds—and inspires even the narrator with a professional sobriety and earnestness befitting the occasion.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.



THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

O Lord our Lord ! thy name how marvellous
 Is in this largè world yspread ! (quoth she)
 For not all only thy laude precious
 Performed is by men of dignity,
 But by the mouth of children thy bounty
 Performed is ; for on the breast suckíng,
 Sometimè showen they thine herying.^s

Wherefore in laud, as I can best and may,
 Of thee, and of the whitè lily flower
 Which that thee bare, and is a maid alway,
 To tell a story I will do my labóur ;
 Not that I may encreasen her honóur,
 For she herselven is honóur and root
 Of bounty, next her son and soulès boot.^h

O mother maid ! O maid and mother free !
 O bush unburnt ! burning in Moses' sight,
 That ravishedst down from the deity,
 Through thine humblèss,ⁱ the ghost^k that in thee
 alight ;
 Of whose virtúe, when he thine hearte light,^l
 Conceivèd was the father's sapience,^m
 Help me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady ! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
 Thy virtue and thy great humility,

^s Praise. ^h Help. ⁱ Humility. ^k Spirit.
 ^l Lighted. ^m Wisdom.

There may no tongue express in no sciéncé ;
 For sometime, Lady ! ere men pray to thee,
 Thou goest before of thy benignity,
 And gettest us the light of thy prayére,
 To guiden us unto thy son so dear.

My cunning ^a is so weak, O blissful queen !
 For to declare thy greate worthiness,
 That I ne may the weighte not sustain ;
 But as a child of twelve months old or less,
 That can unnethes ^o any word express,
 Right so fare I, and therefore I you pray,
 Guideth my song that I shall of you say.

There was in Asia, in a great city, among Christian folks, a Jewery, sustained by a lord of that land for the sake of foul usury and villainous lucre. It was very hateful to Christ and to his company. Through the street men might ride and go, for it was free, and open at either end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood,
 Down at the farther end, in which there were
 Children a heap comen of Christian blood,
 That learned in that schoole year by year
 Such manner doctrine as men usèd there ;
 This is to say, to singen and to read,
 As smalle children do in their childhede.

Among these children was a widow's son, a little clerk, seven years of age, that was accustomed to go day by day to school ; and he was taught also. wherever he saw the image of Christ's mother,—

to kneel adown, and say,
Ave Maria, as he goeth by the way.

Thus hath this widow her little son ytaught,
 Our blissful Lady, Christès mother dear,
 To worship aye, and he forgot it nought ;
 For silly childe will alway soon lere.^p

^a Skill.

^o With difficulty.

^p Learn.

But aye, when I remember on this mattére,
 Saint Nicholas^j stands ever in my preséncé,
 For he so young to Christ did reverence.

This little child his little book learning,
 As he sat in the school at his primére,
 He *Alma Redemptoris* hearde sing,
 As children learned their antiphonere;^k
 And as he durst he drew him near and near,
 And hearkened aye the wordès and the note,
 Till he the firste verse could all by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
 For he so young and tender was of age;
 But on a day his fellow 'gan he pray
 To expounden him this song in his langage,
 Or tell him why this song was in uságe.
 This pray'd he him to cónstrue and declare,
 Full often time upon his kneës bare.

His fellow, which that elder was than he,
 Answered him thus: "This song, I have heard say,
 Was makèd of our blissful Lady free,
 Her to salute, and ekè for to pray
 To be our help and succour when we dey;^l
 I can no more expound in this mattére,
 I learne song; I can but small grammére."

"And is this song made in reverence of Christ's
 other?" said this innocent. "Now, certes, I
 ill with diligence learn it all, ere Christenmass

^j An amusing old Legend says, "This man's holiness, even
 in future time it would be, appeared in the very cradle.
 or whereas the infant on each of the other week-days sucked
 the nurse's milk again and again; he, on the fourth and
 e sixth (Wednesdays and Fridays), being days of abstinence,
 abstained, and sucked but once, and that at eventide."
 o wonder such a child became subsequently the Patron
 int of Children.

^k Antiphones. Chanting alternate verses of the Psalms.

^l Die.

Grisilde is such a martyr. Her story, an embodiment of the spirit which eighteen years ago shone through the words of Him who died upon the cross, saying of them; they know not what they do:" and for eighteen hundred, or eighteen times a hundred years to come, can alone, by its passage through all hearts and institutions, redeem and serve the world from the thousand ills it is heir to. Upon the altar of Love the poet's Clerk's Tale remains through all time as a work of unapproachable value.

END OF VOL. I.

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be gone. Although that for my primer I shall be punished, and shall be beaten thrice in an hour, I will learn it, in order to honour our Lady."

His fellow taught him homeward privily
From day to day till he could it by rote;
And then he sang it well and boldly,
From word to word according with the note.
Twies a day it passed through his throat
To schoolward and homeward when he went;
On Christès mother set was his intent.

As I have said, throughout the Jewèry
This little child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma Redemptoris! ever mo'.
The sweetness hath his heartè pierced so,
Of Christès mother, that to her to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

Our first foe, the serpent Sathanas, that hath his wasps' nest in Jew's heart, up swelled, and said, "O, Hebrew people, alas! is this to you an honest thing, that such a boy shall walk as he pleases in your despite, and sing of such matter, which is against the reverence due to our law?"

From thenceforth the Jews conspired to chase this innocent out of the world. They have hired a homicide that had a privy place in an alley, and as the child began to pass thereby, the cursed Jew seized him and held him fast, and cut his throat and cast him in a pit.

.

This poore widow awaiteth all that night
After her little child, and he came nought;^m
For which as soon as it was dayès light,
With facè pale of dread and busy thought,
She hath at school and elles where him sought,

^m Not.

Till finally she 'gan so far espy
That he last seen was in the Jewery.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She goeth, as she were half out of her mind,
To every place where she hath supposed
By likelihood her little child to find ;
And ever on Christ's mother, meek and kind,
She cried, and at the laste thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewes she him sought.

She asketh and she prayeth piteously to every
Jew that dwelled in that place to tell if her child
went taught by there. They said, " Nay." But Jesus,
of his grace, gave her to think, within a short time,
that her son was cast in a pit beside the place
where she cried for him.

O grete God, that performest thy laud
By mouth of innocents, lo here thy might !
This gem of chastity, this emeraud,^a
And eke of martyrdom the ruby bright,
There^o he with throat ycarven lay upright,
He *Alma Redemptoris* 'gan to sing,
So loud, that all the place 'gan to ring.

The Christian folk that through the streete went,
In comen for to wonder upon this thing,
And hastily they for the provost sent :
He came anon withouten tarrying
And herieth^p Christ, that is of heaven king,
And eke his mother, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewes let he bind.

This child, with piteous lamentation,
Was taken up, singing his song alway,
And with honour and great procession,
They carry him unto the next abbey,
His mother swooning by the biere lay.

^a Emerald.

^o Where.

^p Thanketh.

Unnethes might^r the people that were there,
This newe Rachel bringen from his bier.

With torment, and a shameful death, the provo
causes each one of these Jews to perish that kne
of the murder, and he did it immediately. I
would pay no respect to such wretches.

Evil shall he have that evil will deserve ;
Therefore with wilde horse he did them draw,
And after that he hung them by the law.

Upon his bier aye lieth this innocent
Before the altar while the massè last ;
And after that, the abbot with his convént
Have sped them for to bury him full fast ;
And when they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this child, when sprent^s was th' hol
water,
And sang *O Alma Redemptoris Mater* !

This abbot, which that was a holy man,
As monkès be, or elles ought to be,
This younge child to conjure he began,
And said : " O dearè child ! I holse^t thee
In virtue of the holy Trinity ;
Tell me what is thy causè for to sing,
Since that thy throat is cut, to my seemíng ?

" My throat is cut to the neck-bone," said th
child ; " and naturally I should have died—yea,
long time ago, but Jesus Christ, as you find in book
wills that his glory lasts, and be remembered ;

And for the worship of his mother dear,
Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clear.

^r Scarcely were the people able.

^s Sprinkled.

^t Literal meaning, "embrace round the neck"—from t
Saxon hols-neck. The abbot uses it as an affectionate c
juration.

This well of mercy, Christès mother sweet,
 I lovèd alway, as after my conning ;^a
 And when that I should give up my life, she came
 to me and badè me for to sing this anthem in my
 death, as ye have heard ;

and when that I had sung,
 Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

Wherefore I sing, and sing I must certáin,
 In honour of that blissful maiden free,
 Till from my tongue off taken is the grain.
 And after that thus saide she to me :
 " My little child, then will I fetchen thee,
 When that the grain is from thy tongue ytake ;
 Be not aghast, I will thee not forsake."

This holy monk, this abbot him mean I,
 His tongue out caught, and took away the grain,
 And he gave up the ghost full softly.
 And when this abbot had this wonder seen,
 His salte tearès trill'd^v adown as rain ;

and suddenly he fell flat upon the ground, and lay
 still, as though he had been in bonds.

The convent lay upon the pavement, weeping
 and thanking Christ's dear mother. And after that
 they rose and went forth, and took away their
 martyr from his bier ; and in a tomb of clear
 marble stones they enclose his little sweet body.
 There he is now, God incline us to meet him in
 heaven.

O younge Hugh of Lincoln ! slain also
 With cursed Jewès, as it is notáble,
 For it is but a little while ago.
 Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
 That of his mercy God so merciáble
 On us his greате mercy multiply
 For reverence of his mother Mary.

^a According to my knowledge.

^v Trickled.

REMARKS ON THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

Whether the barbarous treatment of the Jews by Christians during the middle ages ever produced in its reaction so monstrous and apparently incredible a crime as that of the crucifixion of a Christian child, it is difficult to determine now; but it is certain that the belief was widely spread, and equally certain that whole hecatombs of Jews suffered on the scaffold for their alleged guilt.

The particular murder spoken of by the Prioress in the last verse was recorded by Matthew Paris, who states that in the 29th year of Henry III. eighteen Jews were brought to London from Lincoln, and hanged for crucifying a child eight years old. The child, Hugh, was buried with great pomp in Lincoln Cathedral, and canonized. A very rich and costly shrine was also erected over the remains. Henry VIII. swept this away with all the other treasures of the Cathedral, and nothing more important than a piece of raised stone in the southern aisle of the choir now marks the spot.

A still more interesting and durable memorial, however, exists in an old ballad, which we transcribe from the Percy Reliques. The Editor remarks,—

“The following ballad is probably built upon some Italian Legend, and bears a great resemblance to the Prioress's Tale in Chaucer; the poet seems also to have had an eye to the well-known story of *Hugh of Lincoln*, a child said to have been there murdered in the reign of Henry III. The con-

lusion of this ballad appears to be wanting; what it probably contained may be seen in Chaucer. As for Mirry-land Toune, it is probably a corruption of Milan (called by the Dutch Meylandt) Town; the Pa is evidently the river Po, although the Adige, not the Po, runs through Milan."—
Printed from a MS. Copy sent from Scotland.

The rain rins down through Mirry-land toune,
 Sae dois it doune the Pa:
 Sae dois the lads of Mirry-land toune
 Quhan they play at the ba'.

Then out and cam the Jewis dochtér,
 Said, "Will ye cum in and dine?"
 "I winnae cum in, I cannae cum in,
 Without my play-feres nine."

Scho pou'd an apple reid and white
 To intice the zong thing in:
 Scho pou'd an apple white and reid,
 And that the sweit bairne did win.

And scho has taine out a little pen-knife,
 And low down by her gair,
 Scho has twin'd the zong thing and his life;
 A word he never spak mair.

And out and cam the thick thick bluid,
 And out and cam the thin;
 And out and cam the bonny hert's bluid;
 Thair was nae life left in.

Scho laid him on a dressing borde,
 And drest him like a swine,
 And laughing said, "Gae now and play
 With zour sweit play-feres nine."

Scho rowd him in a cake of lead,
 Bade him lie still and sleip.
 Scho cast him in a deip draw well,
 Was fifty fadom deip.

Quhan bells wer rung, and mass was sung,
 And every lady went hame ;
 Then ilka lady had her zong sonne,
 But Lady Helen had nane.

Scho rowd hir mantil hir about,
 And sair sair gan she weip ;
 And she ran into the Jewis castél,
 Quhan they wer all asleip.

" My bonny Sir Hew, my pretty Sir Hew,
 I pray thee to me speik."

" O lady, rin to the deep draw-well
 Gin ze zour sonne wad seik."

Lady Helen ran to the deip draw-well,
 And knelt upon her kne :

" My bonny Sir Hew, an ze be here,
 I pray thee speik to me."

" The lead is wondrous heavy, mither,
 The well is wondrous deip,

A keen penknife sticks in my hert ;
 A word I dounae speik.

Gae hame, gae hame, my mither deir,
 Fetch me my winding sheet,

And at the back o' Mirry-land touné
 Its thair we twa sall meet."

* * * *

This is an affecting composition, but we miss in it not only the coherence of Chaucer's tale, but the exquisite touches he ever throws in, even in his least important works. What a lovely picture, for instance, is that of the child, singing his *Alma Redemptoris* ever with fresh enjoyment, as he goes along the street ! The sweetness of Christ's mother has so pierced his heart, says the Prioress,

that to her to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

Milk, and brown bread, in which she found no lack,
Singed bacon, and sometimes an egg or two :

for she was as it were a kind of labourer.

A yard she had, enclosed all about
With stickès, and a driè ditch without,
In which she had a cock hight Chanticleer.

In all the land there was not his equal for crowing. His voice was merrier than the merry organ that goes on mass days in the churches. More certain was his crowing in his lodging than is a clock or an abbey horologe. He knew naturally each ascension of the equinoctial in that town ; for when fifteen degrees were risen, then he crowed so well that it could not be exceeded.

His comb was redder than the fine corál,
Embattled as it were a castle wall ;
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone ;
Like azure were his leggès and his toen ;^r
His nailès whiter than the lily flower,
And like the burnish'd gold was his colour.

This gentle cock had in his government seven hens, his sisters, and wondrously like to him in colours,

Of which the fairest huèd in the throat
Was clepèd ^s fair Damóselle Partelote.
Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,

and sociable, and bare herself so well since the day since she was sevensnight old, that truly she hath in possession the heart of Chanticleer :

He loved her so, that well was him therewith.
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,

^r Toes.

^s Called.

When that the brighte sun began to spring,
In sweet accord, "My life is fair in land." ^h

For at that time, as I have understood, beasts and
birds could speak and sing. And it so befell that
in a dawning,

As Chanticleer among his wivès all
Sat on his perchè that was in the hall,
And next him sat his faire Partelote,
This Chanticleer 'gan groanen in his throat,

as a man that in his dream is sorely oppressed.

And when that Partelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast, and saide, "Hearte dear!
What aileth you to groan in this mannèr?
Ye be a very sleeper, fye for shame!"

And he said in answer, "I pray you not to take it
in sorrow. By G—, I dreamed I was in such
mischief, just now, that mine heart is yet sorely
affrighted. Now God," quoth he, "direct my
dream rightly, and keep my body out of foul prison.
I dreamed

how that I roamèd up and down
Within our yard, whereas I saw a beast,
Was like a hound, and would have made arrést
Upon my body, and have had me dead.
His colour was betwixt yellow and red;
And tipped was his tail and both his ears
With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs;
His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;
Yet for his look almost for fear I dey,

This without doubt caused me to groan,"

"Away!" quoth Partelote; "fie on you, heart-
less."

^h Most probably a well-known song.

"Alas," quoth she, "for by that God above,
 Now have ye lost my heart and all my love :
 I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
 For certes, what so any woman saith,
 We all desiren, if it mighte be,
 To have a husband, hardy, wise, and free,
 And secret, and no niggard, nor no fool,
 Nor him that is aghast of every tool ;

nor no boaster, by the God in heaven.

How durste ye for shame say to your love
 That any thing might maken you afeard ?
 Have ye no mannès heart, and have a beard ?

Alas ! and can ye be aghast of dreams ! Nothing
 but vanity, God knows, is there in dreaming.
 Dreams are engendered

of repletions
 And oft of fume, and of complexions,
 When humours be too abundant in a wight.
 Certes this dream which ye have met¹ to night
 Cometh of the great superfluity
 Of youre redde cholera, parde ;

which causeth folk to dread in their dreams of
 arrows, and of fire with red flames, of red beasts
 that will bite them, of contests, and of wasps, great
 and little ; just as the humour of melancholy
 causeth many a man to cry in his sleep, for fear of
 bulls, and of black bears, or else black devils, that
 will take them.

Of other humours could I tell alsó,
 That worken many a man in sleep much woe ;
 But I will pass as lightly as I can.

Lo Cato, which that was so wise a man,
 Said he not thus,—Ne do no force² of dreams ?

Now sir, quoth she, when we fly from the beams,

¹ Dreamed.

² Take no heed.

For goddès love as take some laxatife,
 Up' peril of my soul and of my life,
 I counsel you the best, I will not lie,
 That both of choler and of melánccholy
 Ye purgè you ; and for ye should not tarry,
 Though in this town be no apothecary,
 I shall myself two herbès teachen you
 That shall be for your heal

and for your profit. And in our yard I shall find
 the herbs which have naturally the property to
 purge you. . . .

Sir, forget not this for Goddès love ;
 Ye be full cholerick of complexion ;
 'Ware* that the sun in his ascension
 Ne find you not replete of humours hot ;
 And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,
 That ye shall have a fever tertian,
 Or else an ague, that may be your bane.
 A day or two, ye shall have digestives
 Of wormès, ere ye take your laxatives
 Of laureole, centaury, and fumetere,
 Or else of hellebore that groweth there,
 Of catapucè, or of gaitre berries,¹
 Or herb ivy, growing in our yard, that merry is ;
 Pick them right as they grow, and eat them in.
 Be merry, husband ; for your father's kin
 Dreadeth no dream : I can say you no more."
 "Madáme," quoth he, "*grand mercy* of your lore ;
 But natheless as touching Dan Caton,
 That hath of wisdom such a great renown :
 Though that he bade no dreamès for to dread,
 By G—, men may in olde bookès read
 Of many a man more of authority
 Than ever Cato was—

so may I thrive,—that say all the reverse of this ;

* Beware.

¹ Catapuce is a kind of spurge ; gaitre berries are the
 berries of the dog-wood.

And have well founden by experience,
 That dréamès be significations,
 As well of joy as tribulations,
 That folk enduren in this life présent.
 There needeth make of this no argument,

the very trial sheweth it truly.

One of the greatest authors that men read,
 [Cicero,] saith that once two friends

went

On pilgrimage in a full good intent ;
 And happened so they came into a town
 Where there was such a congregatioun
 Of people, and eke so strait of herbergage,^m
 That they ne found so much as a cottáge
 In which they bothe might ylodged be ;
 Wherefore they musten of necessity,
 As for that night, departen company,
 And each of them go'th to his hostelry,
 And took his lodging as it woulde fall.

That one of them was lodged in a stall,
 Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough ;
 That other man was lodged well enough,
 As was his ádvventure or his fortune,

that commonly governs us all.

And so befell that long ere it were day
 This man metⁿ in his bed, there as he lay,
 How that his fellow gan upon him call,
 And said, ' Alas ! for in an ox's stall
 This night shall I be murdered there I lie ;
 Now help me, deare brother ! or I die :
 In alle hastè come to me,' he said.

This man out of his sleep for fear abraid ;^o
 But when that he was waked of his sleep
 He turned him, and took of this no keep ;

^m So straitened for lodging-room.

ⁿ Dreamed.

^o Started.

Him thought his dream was but a vanity.
Thus twies in his sleeping dreamèd he.

And at the third time his companion came, as he
thought; and said, 'Now I am slain;

Behold my bloody woundès deep and wide.
Arise up early in the morrow tide,
And at the west gate of the town (quoth he)
A carte full of dung there shalt thou see,
In which my body is hid privily;

oldly arrest that cart. My gold, truth to say,
caused my murder.' And he told him every point
ow he was slain

With a full piteous facè, pale of hue.
And trusteth well, his dream he found full true;
For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,
To his fellowès inn he took his way.
And when that he came to this ox's stall,
After his fellow he began to call.

The hostèler answerèd him anon,
And saide, 'Sir, your fellow is agone,
As soon as day he went out of the town.'

This man began to fall in suspicion, remembering
that he had dreamed, and forth he goes—no longer
ould he delay—unto the west gate of the town,
ad found a dung cart, as it went to manure land,

That was arrayed in the samè wise
As ye have heard the deade man devise;
And with a hardy heart he gan to cry—
'Vengeance and justice of this felony!
My fellow murdered is this samè night,
And in this cart he lieth gaping upright.
I cry out on the ministers (quoth he)
That shoulde keep and rulen this city:
Harow! alas! here lieth my fellow slain!'

Why should I say more of this tale? The people
shed out, and cast the cart to the ground, and in

Of any dream, so holy was his heart.
By G— I hadde lever^e than my shirt
That ye had read his legend, as have I.

Shortly I say as for conclusiōn,
That I shall have of this avisiōn^h
Adversity; and I say furthermore,
That I ne tellⁱ of laxatives no store;
For they be venomous, I wot it well;
I them defy; I love them never a deal.^j
But let us speak of mirth, and stint all this.
Madame Partélotè, so have I bliss,
Of one thing God hath sent me largè grace,
For when I see the beauty of your face,
Ye be so scarlet red about your eyen,
It maketh all my drede for to dien;
For all so siker^k as *in principio*
Mulier est hominis confusio,
(Madam, the sentence of this Latin is,
Woman is mannès joy and mannès bliss.)
For when I feel a-night your softe side

I am so full of joy and of solâce,
that I defy both dreams and visions.”

And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day; and eke his hennès all,
And with a chuck he ’gan them for to call,
For he had found a corn lay in the yard.
Royal he was, he was no more afeard.

He looketh as it were a grim leóún,
And on his toes he roameth up and down;
Him deigneth not to set his feet to ground:
He chucketh when he hath a corn yfound,
And to him runnen then his wivès all.

Thus royal as a prince is in his hall,

^e Rather. ^h Vision. ⁱ Take of. ^j Never a bit.
 ^k Surely.

Leave I this Chanticleer in his pastúre,
And after will I tell his adventure.

When that the month in which the world began
That highte March, when God first makèd man,
Was còmplete, and ypassèd were alsó,
Sithen March ended, thirty days and two,
Befell, that Chanticleer in all his pride,
His seven wivès walken him beside,
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sun,
That in the sign of Taurus had yrun
Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more,
He knew by kind,^k and by no other lore,
That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.¹
"The sun," he said, "is clomben up on heaven
Twenty degrees and one, and more ywis.^m
Madame Partélotè, my worldès bliss,
Hearkeneth these blissful birdès, how they sing;
And see the freshe flow'res how they spring;
Full is mine heart of revel and soláce.

But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case,ⁿ
For ever the latter end of joy is woe;
God wot that worldly joy is soon ago.^o

And if a rhetorician could fairly indite, he might
safely write it in a chronicle as a sovereign nota-
bility.

Now every wise man let him hearken me:
This story is so true I undertake,
As is the book of Lancelot du Lake,
That women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn again to my sentéce.

A col-fox, full of sly iniquity, that had dwelled
in the grove three years,

By high imagination forecast,
roke through the hedges the same night, into the

^k Instinct of nature.

¹ Song.

^m Ywis—of a certainty.

ⁿ Into a sorrowful case.

^o Gone.

wrought ; or if his knowledge compelleth me not a bit, except by conditional necessity.

I will not have to do of such mattére :
My tale is of a cock, as ye may hear,
That took his counsel of his wife with sorrow,
To walken in the yard upon the morrow

that he had dreamed the dream, as I told you.

Womennès counsels be full often cold ;
Womennès counsel brought us first to woe,
And made Adám from Paradise to go,
Thereas he was full merry and well at ease.

But for I know not whom I might offend, if I
were to blame women's advice, pass it over, for I
said it in my game.

Read authors, where they treat of such mattére,
And what they say of women ye may hear :
These be the cockès wordès, and not mine ;
I can none harm of no womán divine.

Fair in the sand, to bathe her merrily,
Lieth Partelot and all her sisters by,
Against the sun ; and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea ;
(For Physiologus sayeth sikerly *
How that they singen well and merrily.)

And so befell that as he cast his eye
Among the wortès,[†] and on a butterfly,
He was 'warè of this fox that lay full low ;
Nothing ne list him thenne for to crow,
But cried anon " Cok ! Cok !" and up he start
As man that was affrighted in his heart ;
For naturally a beast desireth flee
From his contráry, if he may it see,
Though he ne'er erst had seen it with his eye.

This Chanticleer, when he 'gan him espy,

* Truly sayeth.

† Herbes.

He would have fled, but that the fox anon
 Said, "Gentle sir, alas! what will ye done?"^a
 Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?
 Now certes I were worse than any fiend,
 If I to you would harm or villany.
 I am not come your counsel to espy,
 But truely the cause of my coming
 Was only for to hearken how ye sing;
 For truely ye have as merry a steven^v
 As any angel hath that is in heaven.
 Therewith ye have of music more feeling
 Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
 My lord, your father (God his soule bless!)
 And eke your mother of her gentleness,
 Have in my house ybeen to my great ease,
 And certes, sir, full fain I would you please.
 But for men speak of singen, I will say,

so may I use my two eyes,

Save you, ne heard I never man so sing
 As did your father in the morrowning.^w
 Certes it was of heart all that he sung.
 And for to make his voice the morè strong,
 He would so pain him^z that, with both his eyen,
 He muste wink, so loud he woulde crien,
 And stoden on his tiptoes therewithal,
 And stretchen forth his necke long and small.
 And eke he was of such discretion
 That there n' as no man in no regton
 That him in song or wisdom mighte pass.
 I have well read in Dan Burnel, the ass,
 Among his verse, how that there was a cock,
 That for a priestes son gave him a knock
 Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,^a
 He made him for to lose his benefice.
 But certain there is no comparison
 Betwixt the wisdom and discretion

^a Do.

^v Song.
^z Strain, exert himself.

^w Morning.

^z Foolish.

Of your father and his subtilty.
 Now singeth, sir, for Sainte Charity!
 Let see, can you your father counterfeit?"

This Chanticleer his winges 'gan to beat
 As man that could not his treason espy,
 So was he ravished with his flattery.

Alas, ye lords, many a false flatterer is in your court, and many a deceiver that better pleases you, by my faith, than he that speaks truly unto you. Read Ecclesiastes on flattery. Beware, ye lords, of the treachery of such men.

This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes, stretching his neck, and held his eyes shut, and began to crow loudly for the occasion, and Dan Russel,^a the fox, started up at once, and seized him by the throat, and bore him on his back toward the wood, for yet there was no man pursued him.

O destiny that may not be avoided!

Alas! that chanticleer flew from the beams:
 Alas! his wife ne raughte^b not of dreams.

And on a Friday all this mischance befell. . . . O Godfrey,^c dear sovereign master, that when thy worthy king, Richard, was slain with shot, complainedst so sorely of his death—why have I not now thy lore and science to chide the Friday, as ye did: for on a Friday truly Richard was killed. Then could I show you how I would lament for Chanticleer's fright and pain. Certainly such a cry,

nor lamentation
 N' as never of ladies made, when Ilion

^a So called, it is supposed, from the russet colour of his coat.

^b Recked not.

^c Of Monmouth.

Was won, and Pyrrhus with his straighte swerd,
 When he had hent^d King Priam by the beard,
 And slain him (as saith us Eneïdos^e)
 As maden all the hennès in the close,^f
 When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.
 But sovereignly, Dame Partelotè shrigh^g
 Full louder than did Hasdruballès wife
 When that her husband had ylost his life,
 And that the Romans hadden burnt Carthage :—
 She was so full of torment and of rage,
 That wilfully into the fire she start
 And burnt herselven with a steadfast heart.

O woful hennès ; right so crieden ye,
 As when that Nero burnte the city
 Of Romè, cried the senatourès wives,
 For that their husbands losten all their lives ;
 Withouten guilt, this Nero hath them slain.

Now will I turn unto my tale again :
 The silly^h widow, and her daughters two,
 Hearthen these hennès cry and maken woe,
 And out at the doorès starten they anon,
 And saw the fox toward the wood is gone,
 And bare upon his back the cock away :
 They crieden out, " Harow ! and wala wa !
 Aha the fox !" and after him they ran,
 And eke with stavès many another man ;
 Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot, and Garlánd ;
 And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand ;
 Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogs,
 So fearèd were for barking of the dogs,
 And shouting of the men and women eke
 They runnen so, them thought their heartès break :
 They yelledenⁱ as fiendès do in hell.
 The duckès crieden as men would them quell ;^j
 The geese for feare flew over the trees ;
 Out of the hive came the swarm of bees ;

^d Seized. ^e As the Æneid tells us. ^f Yard.
^g Shrieked. ^h Simple. ⁱ Felled. ^j Crush, destroy.

So hideous was the noise, ah *benedicite*!
 Certes ne Jacke Straw, and his menie,
 Ne maden never shoutès half so shrill,
 When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
 As thilke day was made upon the fox.

They brought trumpets of brass, of box, of horn,
 and of bone,

in which they blew and pooped,
 And therewithal they shriekèd and they hooped;
 It seemed as that the heaven shoulde fall.
 Now, goode men, I pray you harkeneth all,
 Lo, how fortunè turneth suddenly
 The hope and pride eke of their enemy.
 This cock that lay upon the fox's back
 In all his dread, unto the fox he spake,
 And saide: "Sir, if that I were as ye,
 Yet would I say (as wisly,^{*} God help me,)
 Turneth again, ye proude churlès all;
 A very pestilence upon you fall!
 Now am I come unto the woodès side,
 Maugre your head, the cock shall here abide;
 I will him eat, in faith, and that anon."

The fox answer'd, "In faith it shall be done;"
 And as he spake the word, all suddenly

the cock broke swiftly from his mouth,

And high upon a tree he flew anon.

And when the fox saw that the cock was gone,
 "Alas!" quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
 I have," quoth he, "ydone to you trespass,
 In as muchè as I makèd you afeard,
 When I you hent,¹ and brought out of your yard.
 But, sir, I did it in no wick^m intent:
 Come down, and I shall tell you what I meant,
 I shall say sooth to you, God help me so."

"Nay then, quoth he, I shreweⁿ us bothe two,

^{*} Certainly.

¹ Seized.

^m Wicked.

ⁿ Curse.



And first I shrew myself, both blood and bonès,
If thou beguile me oftener than ones ;
Thou shalt no morè through thy flattery,
Do me ° to sing, and winken with mine eye.

For he that winketh wilfully, when he should see,
God never allows to thrive."

"Nay," quoth the fox, "but God give him mis-
chance,
That is so indiscreet of governance,
That jangleth, when that he should hold his peace."

Lo, what it is to be reckless and negligent, and to
put trust in flattery. But ye that hold this tale
a folly,

As of a fox, or of a cock, or hen,
Take the morality thereof, good men ;

for Saint Paul saith, that all that is written to our
doctrine, it is written certainly.

Taketh the fruit, and let the chaff be still,
Now, goode God, if that it be thy will,
As saith my lord, so make us all good men,
And oring us to thy highe bliss. *Amen.*

° Make me.

REMARKS ON THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

That Dryden could not improve, but found it easy to deteriorate, Chaucer, we have already endeavoured to show in our Remarks on the Knight's and the Wife of Bath's Tales. We have there seen him dealing by turns with the supernatural, the sublime, the pathetic, the chivalrous, and the simply poetical, and ever exhibiting a deficiency of the highest manifestations of the "vision and the faculty *divine*;" and thus rendering more evident by the contrast he has so imprudently provoked, the wonderful height, and completeness, and inexhaustible wealth of his great original. To complete this contrast, Dryden has given us his version of the Nun's Priest's Tale, a story of pure humour; and which, by its very perfection in Chaucer, tends to shut out criticism by leaving it nothing to do but to enjoy and to praise. Humour is poured through it in as rich, and deep, and constant a stream, as through the most distinguished of the merely humorous productions of our literature; but is also accompanied by a subtle and delicate spirit—there hangs over it a poetical transparent atmosphere—that the merely humorous writers know nothing of themselves, and of course cannot therefore create for others. In this as in nearly all other respects, Chaucer resembles Shakspeare; each one, when he chooses to put forth his strength, excels all other writers even in their own limited spheres of excel-

lence. What an argument is this for the true law of education, the equal development of all the faculties! There has probably been no greater mistake ever made, whether in education or legislation, in political or in social economy, than is involved in the supposition that there is any real gain to be obtained by the partial neglect of some or other of God's gifts. What is true of a Chancer in his position at the top of the intellectual scale, may be equally true of the mass of men, in their position, far lower down.

One of the most striking passages of the Nun's Priest's Tale, is that relating to the carrying off of the Cock on the Fox's back. Let us compare Chaucer and Dryden.

CHAUCER.

The silly widow, and her daughters two,
 Hearden these hennès cry and maken woe,
 And out at the doore starten they anon,
 And saw the Fox toward the wood is gone,
 And bare upon his back the Cock away.

These lines are as quick and hurried as the incident they describe.

DRYDEN

gives us :

The trembling widow, and her daughters twain,
 This woeful cackling cry with horror heard,
 Of those distracted damsels in the yard,
 And starting up beheld the heavy sight,
 How Reynard to the forest took his flight,
 And 'cross his back, as in triumphant scorn,
 The hope and pillar of the house was borne.

So we perceive the widow must be a "trembling" one at the first outcry of the hens, instead of, as

Chaucer, a "silly" or simple one; she and her daughters must hear with "horror," instead of innuendo, as they do in Chaucer, to see first whether there is any thing to be horrified about; and the result is, that Dryden has lost all power of making climax when he most wanted it—that is, when they see the Fox with the Cock on his back,—and therefore he does not attempt it. In place of the dramatic and simply natural exclamation of

CHAUCER—

"Harow! and wala wa!

Aha the Fox!"

Dryden must content himself with the neither dramatic nor true line,

DRYDEN.

"The Fox! the *wicked Fox!* was all the cry."

And all through the description there is the same faith on Chaucer's part, the same want of faith in Dryden's, in the natural simplicities. How vigorous and rapid—how perfect an echo of sound and sense—are the following lines!

CHAUCER.

and after him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man;
Ran Col our dog, and Talbot, and Garland,
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand;
Ran cow and calf; and eke the very hogs
So feared were for barking of the dogs
And shouting of the men and women eke
They runnen so, them thought their heartes break:
They yelleden as fiendes do in hell.
The duckes crieden as men would them quell; *

* Crush—destroy.

The geese for feare flew over the trees ;
 Out of the hive came the swarm of bees ;
 So hideous was the noise, ah *benedicite* !
 Certes, ne Jacke Straw, and his menie,
 Ne maden never shoutès half so shrill,
 When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
 As thilke day was made upon the Fox.
 Of brass they broughten beames,^b and of box,
 Of horn, and bone, in which they blew and poopèd,
 And therewithal they shrieked, and they hoopèd,
 It seemed as that the heaven shoulde fall.

On the other hand, how wordy and full of exaggeration are the corresponding lines by

DRYDEN.

Out from his house ran every neighbour nigh,
 The Vicar first, and after him the crew,
 With forks and staves the felon to pursue ;
 Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot with the band,
 And Malkin with her distaff in her hand ;
 Ran cow and calf, and family of hogs,
 In panic horror of pursuing dogs,
 With many a deadly grunt and doleful squeak ;
 Poor swine, as if their *pretty* hearts would break.
 The shouts of men, *the women, in dismay,*
With shrieks augment the terror of the day.
 The ducks that heard the proclamation cried,
 And fear'd a persecution might betide,
 Full twenty mile from town their voyage take,
 Obscure in rushes of the liquid lake.
 The geese fly over the barn ; the bees in arms
 Drive headlong from their waxen cells in swarms.
 Jack Straw at London-stone, with all his rout,
 Struck not the city with so loud a shout ;

^b Trumpets or horns.

*Not when with English hate they did pursue
A Frenchman, or an unbelieving Jew ;
Not when the welkin rung with one and all,
And echoes bounded back from Fox's hall ;
Earth seemed to sink beneath, and Heaven above to
fall.*

*With might and main they chac'd the murderous Fox
With brazen trumpets and inflated box,
To kindle Mars with military sounds ;
Nor wanted horns to inspire sagacious hounds.*

The extraordinary carelessness or deficiency of artistical skill evidenced by the introduction of the last four lines, with the nonsense about "Mars" and "military sounds," after the description to which they properly belonged had been brought to a close, must strike every one. But all through, Chaucer's delicate and spirit-inspiring champagne is changed by Dryden into what is at the best but a "strong full-bodied port," as the vintners say. In Chaucer the thing itself is brought before us ; the flesh-and-blood rustics, the true country, the very aroma of hay-fields seems to rise from the page ; Dryden's is just such a rough and vigorous description of the thing as an able poet, always accustomed to enjoy the country—from a distance—might be expected to be able to give ; no more. And the strangest part of all these strange literary transactions, is the fact ever staring us in the face, that all that is good in Dryden, with few, if any, exceptions, belongs to Chaucer ; and all that is bad in Dryden is his own unquestionable property.

The germ of the Nun's Priest's Tale is to be found in the collection of *Æsop*ean and other fables by a French poetess of the name of Marie, and she states she obtained it from an

Anglo-Saxon translation of the Latin, made no less a personage than the good and great Alfred. Tyrrwhitt gives the passage in French from Marie as a convincing proof how Chaucer was to work up an excellent Tale of very small materials.

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.

1

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3

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.

In order to avoid the minister and the nurse unto vice, which men call in English Idleness, the porter of the Gate of Delight—and by her opposite, that is to say, by lawful Business, to overpower her, we ought certainly to do our utmost, lest that the fiend seize us through our idleness.

For he that waiteth with his thousand subtle cords continually to catch us, when he may espy a man in idleness, can catch him so lightly in his trap that until he is seized by the skirt, he is not aware the fiend hath taken him in hand: well, therefore, ought we to work, and to resist idleness.

And though men never dread to die, yet they, doubtless, see well, by reason, that idleness is the root of sloth, of which no good increase ever cometh. And lo! sloth holdeth them in a leash only for to sleep, eat, and drink, and to devour all that others labour for.

To put us from such idleness, that is a cause of great confusion, I have here done my business faithfully to translate the legend—

Right of thy glorious life and passion,
Thou with thy garland, wrought of rose and lily,
Thee mean I, maid and martyr, Saint Cecily.*

And thou, that arte flower of virgins all,
Of whom that Bernard list so well to write,
To thee at my beginning first I call,
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me endite,
Thy maiden's death, that won through her merit
The eternal life, and over the fiend victory,
As man may often readen in her story.

Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy son ;
thou well of mercy ; thou cure of sinful souls, in
whom that God, of his bounty, chose to dwell ;
thou humble, yet high above every earthly being ;
thou madest so noble our nature, that the Maker
did not disdain—

His son in blood and flesh to clothe and wind.

Within the blissful cloister of thy sides took man's
shape, the Eternal Love, and Peace, that is Lord
and guide of the Trinity, whom earth, and sea,
and heaven for ever unceasingly praise. And thou
virgin unspotted bare of thy body—

The Creator of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity,
That thou, that art the sun of excellence,
Not only helpest them that prayen ^a thee,
But oftentime of thy benignity,
Full freely, ere that men thine help beseech,
Thou goest before, and art their lives leech.^b

Now help, thou meek and blissful fair maid, me,
banished wretch, in this desert of gall ; think on
the woman of Cana that said that whelps ate some
of the crumbs that fell from their lord's table ; and
though that I, unworthy son of Eve, be sinful, yet
accept my belief.

^a *Pray to.*

^b *Physician—healer.*

And inasmuch as that faith is dead without works,
 ive me therefore wit and space so to work that I
 e free from the place of utter darkness.

O thou that art so fair and full of grace,
 Be thou mine advocate in that highe place,
 Thereas^d withouten end is sung Hosanne!
 Thou, Christès mother, daughter dear of Anne.

And of thy light my soul in prison light,
 That troubled is by the contagion,
 Of my body, and also by the weight
 Of earthly lust, and false affection;
 O haven of refuge! O salvation
 Of them that be in sorrow and in distress,
 Now help, for to my work I will me 'dress.*

Yet pray I you that readen that I write,
 Forgive me, that I do no diligence
 This ilke story subtly to endite;
 For both have I the wordès and sentéce
 Of him, that at the saintès reverence
 The story wrote, and followed their légend;
 And pray you that ye will my work amend.

First will I you the name of Saint Cecily
 Expound, as men may in her story see:
 It is to say in English, Heaven's lily,
 For purè chasteness of virginity,
 Or for the whiteness had of honesty,
 And green of conscience, and of good fame,
 The sweete savour, lily was her name.

Or Cecile is to say, the way to blind,^f
 For she example was by good teaching;
 Or else Cecily, as I written find,
 Is joinèd by a manner cónjoining,
 Of heaven and *ka*; and here in figuring

^d Where.

* Address myself.

^f The way or guide *of* or *for* the blind.

The heaven is set for thought of holiness,
And *lia* for her lasting business.

Cecilia may also be explained in this mann
wanting of blindness, from her great light of
dom, and from her clear qualities.

Or elles lo, this maiden's namè bright
Of heaven and *Leos* cometh, for which by rigl
Men might her well the heaven of people call,
Example of good and wisè workès all.

For *Leos* people in English is to say ;
And right as men may in the heaven see
The sun and moon, and starrès every way,
Right so men ghostly^b in this maiden free
Sawen of faith the magnanimity,
And eke the clearness whole of sapience,¹
And sundry workès, bright of excellence.

And right so as these philosóphers write,
That heaven is swift and round, and eke burni
Right so was fair Cecilia the white—
Full swift and busy in every good working,
And round and whole in good persévering,
And burning ever in charity full bright :
Now have I you declared what she hight.^k

This maiden, bright Cecile, as her life saith
Was come of Romans, and of noble kind,
And from her cradle fostered in the faith
Of Christ, and bare his Gospel in her mind.
She never ceasèd, as I written find,
Of her prayére, and God to love and dread,
beseeching him to keep her in purity.

And when this maiden should unto a man
Ywedded be, that was full young of age,
Which that yclepèd was Valerian,
And day was comen of her marriage,
She, full devout and humble in her couráge,

^b In spirit.

¹ Wisdom.

^k Was called.

Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,
Had next her flesh yclad her in a hair.¹

And while the organs made melody, to God alone,
in her heart, thus she sung: "O Lord, keep my
soul and body unspotted, lest that I be brought to
confusion." And for His love that died on the
tree, she fasted every second or third day, ever
busily praying in her orisons.

As the night came, she said to her husband privately,

"O sweet and well-beloved spouse dear,
There is a counsel,^m and ye will it hear,
Which that right fain I would unto you say,
So that ye swear ye will it not betray."

Valerian began quickly to swear unto her, that
for no cause or thing that might be, would he betray
her to any one; and then at once she said to him,

"I have an angel which that loveth me,
That with great love, wheresoⁿ I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep;

And if that he may feelen out of dread^o
That ye me touch or love in villany,
He right anon will slay you with the dead,
And in your youthe thus ye shoulde die;
And if that ye in cleane love me gie,^p
He will you love as me, for your cleanness,
And show to you his joy and his brightnéss."

This Valerian, corrected as God would,
Answered again, "If I shall trusten thee,
Let me that angel see, and him behold;
And if that it a very angel be,
Then will I do as thou hast prayèd me;

¹ Hair cloth. ^m Secret. ⁿ Whether.

^o Out of doubt. ^p Guide.

And if thou love another man, forsooth,
Right with this sword then will I slay you both.

Cecile answer'd anon right in this wise :
" If that you list, the angel shall ye see,
So that ye trowe^a on Christ, and you baptize ;
Go forth to Via Appia (quoth she),
That from this town ne stand but milès three,
And to the poore folks that therè dwellen,
Say them right thus, as that I shall you tellen.

" Tell them, that I, Cecile, you to them sent
To shoven you the good Urban the old
For secret needès, and for good intent ;
And when that ye Saint Urban have behold,^r
Tell him the wordès which I to you told ;
And when that he hath purgèd you from sin,
Then shall ye see that angel ere ye twinne."^a

Valerian goes to the place, and just as she h
taught him, he found the holy Urban anon, lurki
among the burial-places of the saints ; and he i
mediately, without delay, did his message ;

And when that he it told,
Urban for joy his handès 'gan uphold.
'The tearès from his eyen let he fall :
" Almighty Lord, O Jesu Christ," quoth he,
" Sower of chaste counsell, herd^t of us all,
The fruit of thilke seed of chastity
That thou hast sown in Cecile, take to thee :
Lo, like a busy bee withouten guile,
Thee serveth aye thine owen thrall Cecile."

For this spòuse, that she took but now, . . . s
sendeth here,

As meek as ever was any lamb to ewe.
And with that word anon there 'gan appear
An old man, clad in whitè clothès clear,

^a Believe.

^r Beheld.

^s Depart.

^t Keeper.

That had a book with letters of gold in hand,
And 'gan before Valerian to stand.

Valerian, as dead, fell down from fear, when he
saw him; and he then took him up, and in his book
he thus began to read, of Lord, of Faith, of God
one in his power, of Christendom, and of the
father of all,

"Aboven all, and over all everywhere :"
These wordes all with gold ywritten were.

When this was read, then said this olde man,
" 'Liest^a thou this thing or no ? say yea or nay."
" I 'lievè all this thing," quoth Valerian,
" For soother^w thing than this I dare well say,
Under the heaven no wight thinken may."
Tho^x vanished the olde man, he n' iste where,
And Pope Urbán him christenèd right there.

Valerian goeth home, and finds Cecily
Within his chamber with an angel stand;
This angel had of roses and of lily
Coronès two, the which he bare in hand,
And first to Cecile, as I understand,
He gave that one, and after 'gan he take
That other to Valerian her make.^y

" With body clean, and with unwemmed^z thought;
Keepeth^a aye well these coronès two," quoth he,
" From Paradise to you I have them brought,
Ne never more ne shall they rotten^b be,
Ne lose their sweete savour, trusteth me,
Ne never wight shall see them with his eye
But^c he be chaste, and hatè villany.

And thou, Valerian, for that thou now assentest

^a Believest.

^w Truer.

^x Then.

^y Mate.

^z Unspotted.

^a Keep.

^b Or, in other words, They shall never fade.

^c Unless.

to good counsel, say what will best please
thou shalt have thy boon."

"I have a brother," quoth Valerian, th
"That in this world I lovè no man so;
I pray you that my brother may have gra
To know the truth, as I do in this place."

The angel said, "God liketh thy desir
the palm of martyrdom, ye shall both c
his blissful rest." And with that word
his brother came, and when that he perc
fragrance

Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Within his heart he 'gan to wonder fast.

And said, "I wonder this time of the y
Whennès that sweet savour cometh so
Of roses and lilies, that I smelle here;
For though I had them in mine handès tw
The savour might in me no deeper go:
The sweete smell, that in mine heart I fir
Hath changèd me all in another kind."

Valerian saide; "Two coronas have w
Snow-white and rosy-red, that shinen cles
Which that thine eyen have no might to s
And as thou smellest them through my pr
So shall thou see them, levè brother dear,
If it so be thou wilt withouten sloth
Believe aright, and know the very troth."

Tiburcè answered; "Sayest thou this 1
In soothness,^e or in dreame hearken I this
"In dreamès," quoth Valerian, "have w
Unto this time, brother mine, ywis: s
But now at rest in truth our dwelling is."

^d Then. • Truth. † Been. & Certa

"How wott'st thou this?" quoth Tiburce; "in what wise?"

Quoth Valerian; "that shall I thee devise.

The angel of God hath taught me the truth, and thou shalt see it, if thou wilt renounce the idols, and be pure, and nothing else."* Then Cecilia showed him, plain and fully, that all idols are but vain, for they are deaf and dumb, and charged him to leave them.

"Whoso that troweth^s not this, a beast he is,"
Quoth this Tiburce, "if that I shall not lie."

And she 'gan kiss his breast when she heard this,
And was full glad he coulde truth espy.

"This day I takè thee for mine ally,"

Saide this blissful faire maiden dear.

And after that she said as ye may hear:

"Lo, right so as the love of Christ," quoth she,
"Made me thy brother's wife, right in that wise,
Anon for mine ally here take I thee,

* We venture to relegate to the foot of our page the parenthetical passage here following:—

(And of the miracle of these coronas tway,
Saint Ambrose in his preface list to say,
Solemnly this noble doctor dear
Commendeth it, and saith in this mannère:—

The palm of martyrdom for to receive,
Saint Cecilie, fulfilled of goddès gift
The world and eke her chamber 'gan she weave,^b
Witness Tiburce's and Cecily's shrift,
To which God of his bounty woulde shift
Corones two, of flowerès well smelling
And made his angel them the coronas bring.

The maid hath brought these men to bliss above;
The world hath wist what it is worth certain
Devotion of chastity to love.)

^s Believeth.

^b Depart from.

Sithen that thou wilt thine idóls despise :
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptize
And make thee clean, so that thou may'st behold
The angel's face, of which thy brother told."

Tiburce answered, and saide, " Brother dear,
First tell me whither I shall, and to what man."
" To whom?" quoth he; " come forth with go
cheer,

I will lead thee unto the Pope Urbán."

" To Urban? brother mine, Valerian!"

Quoth then Tiburce, " Wilt thou me thither lea
Me thinketh that it were a wondrous deed.

Thou meanest not Urban," quoth he then, " t
has been so often condemned to death, and w
dwelleth always in corners, running to and fro,

And dare not onès putten forth his head ?
Men should him burnen in a fire so red,
If he were found, or that men might him spy,
And we also, to bear him company.

And while we seek this divinity, that is privily |
in heaven, we shall be burnt in this world."

To whom Cecily answered boldely,
" Men mighten dreaden well and skilfully ^b
This life to lose, mine owen deare brother,
If this were living only and none other.

But there is better life in other place
That never shall be lost, ne dread thee nought,
Which Goddès son us toldè through his grace ;
That father's son, which alle thingès wrought,
And all that wrought is with a skilful thought.
The ghost, that from the father 'gan proceed,
Hath souled ^k them withouten any drede."

" That shall I tell thee," quoth she, " befor

^b Wisely.

ⁱ Have thou no dread of it.

^k Assoiled—saved their soul.

go. Just as a man hath threefold wisdom—memory, imagination, and judgment—so in one being of divinity there may very well be three persons.” Then she began busily to preach Christ’s message, and to teach his sorrows, and many points of his passion : How God’s son was detained in this world to perform full remission for mankind,

That was ybound in sin and carès cold ;
 Alle this thing she unto Tiburce told,
 And after this Tiburce in good intent,
 With Valerian to Pope Urban he went.

He

thankèd God, and with glad heart and light
 He christened him, and made him in that place
 Perfect in his learning, and Goddès knight.
 And after this Tiburce got such grace,
 That every day he saw in time and space
 The angel of God, and every manner boon¹
 That he God askèd, it was sped full soon.

It were full hard by order for to sain
 How many wonders Jesus for them wrought.
 But at the last, to tellen short and plain,
 The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,
 And them before Almache, the Prefect, brought,
 Which them apposed, and knew all their intent,
 And to the image of Jupiter them sent.

And said, “ Whoso will do no sacrifice, strike off his head ! This is my sentence here.” Maximus, an officer of the Prefect—and his Cornicular—seized these martyrs, and when he led the saints forth, wept himself for pity.

When Maximus had heard the saints’ lore, he obtained leave of the tormentors, and led them to

¹ Of boon.

his house. And with their preaching, before eve, they began to drive away the false faith tormentors, and of Maximus, and of his peopl to make them believe in God only.

Cecilia came with priests when it was night, and christened them all together.

And afterward when day was waxen light,
Cecile then said, with a full stedfast cheer,
“ Now Christès owen knightès, leve^m and des
Cast all away the works of darkèness
And armeth you in armès of brightnèss.

Ye have, forsooth, ydone a great battaillè,
Your course is done, your faith have ye conse
Go to the crown of life that may not fail,
The rightful judgè, which that ye have serve
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved.”
And when this thing was said, as I devise,
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.

But when they weren to the place ybrough
To tellen shortly the conclusiön,
They n'ouldeⁿ incense, ne sacrifice right nou
But on their knees they setten them adown,
With humble heart and sad devotion,
And losten both their headès in the place :
Their soules wenten to the King of grace.

This Maximus, who saw this thing happen
anon with piteous tears,

That he their soulès saw to heaven glide
With angels, full of clearness, and of light,
And with his word converted many a wight;

for which Almachius caused him to be beater
whips of lead, till he began to leave his life.

^m Pleasant.

ⁿ Would not.

Cecile him took, and buried him anon
 By Tiburce and Valerian softely,
 Within their burying place, under the stone;
 And after this Almachius hastily
 Bade his ministers fetchen openly
 Cecile, so that she might in his preséce
 Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incénse.

But they, converted at her wisè lore,
 Wepten full sore, and gaven full credénce
 Unto her word, and cryden more and more,
 "Christ! Goddès son, withouten difference
 Is very God: this is all our senténce,
 That hath so good a servant him to serve:
 Thus with one voice we trowen,^a though we
 sterve."^b

Almachius, that heard of this doing, bade them
 stch Cecile, that he might see her. And at the
 ery first, lo, this was his question—

"What manner woman arte thou?" quoth he.

"I am a gentlewoman born." quoth she.

"I aske thee," quoth he, "though it thee grieve,
 Of thy religion and of thy believe."

Why then begin your question foolishly," quoth
 he, "that would two answers conclude in one de-
 and? Ye ask ignorantly." Almachius said to
 at similitude, "Of whence cometh so rude an
 nswer?" "Of whence?" quoth she, when she
 as asked,

"Of conscénce, and of good faith unfeign'd."

Almachius said, "Takest thou no heed of my
 ower?" And she answered him thus: "You
 ight is little to dread, for every mortal man's
 ower is but like a bladder of wind certainly.

^a Believe.

^b Perish.

For with a needle's point, when it is blow,^c
May all the boast of it be laid full low."

"Wrongfully thou began," quoth he, "and yet in wrong thou perseverest. Knowest thou not how our free and mighty princes have thus commanded and made ordinance, that every Christian wight shall have suffering unless he will deny his Christianity; whilst he may go freely if he will renounce it?"

"Your princes err, as do your nobles," quoth then Cecilia, "and with a wild sentence

Ye make us guilty, and it is not sooth
For ye, that knowen well our innocence,
For as much as we do aye reverence
To Christ, and for we bear a Christian name,
Ye put on us a crime, and eke a blame.

But we, that know that name so well for a virtuous one, may not deny it." Almachius answered, "Choose one of these two: do sacrifice, or renounce Christianity,

That thou may now escapen by that way."
At which this holy blissful fairè maid
'Gan for to laugh, and to the judgè said—

"O judge, confused in thy folly, wouldest thou that I renounced innocence to make me a wicked wight?" quoth she. "Lo! here in audience he dissimuleth. He stareth, and is mad in his inadvertency." Almachius then said to her,

"Unhappy wretch, knowest thou not how far my power may extend? Hath not our mighty princes given—yea, both power and authority—to me to *make folk live or die?*

^c *When it—the bladder—is fully blow, or blown.*

Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?"

"I ne speak not but stedfastly," quoth she,

"Not proudly; for I say, as for my side,

We haten, deadly, thilke vice of pride.

And if thou dread not to hear a truth, then will I
how all openly, and by right, that thou hast made
great falsehood; thou sayest thy princes have
given thee power both for to slay and for to give
life to a wight—thou, that canst only bereave of
life, and hast no other power nor permission. But
thou mayest say they have made thee minister of
death; for if thou speak of more thou liest; for
thy power is bare."

"Put away thy boldness," said Almachius then;

"And sacrifice to our goddès ere thou go.

I recke not what wrong that thou me proffer,

For I can suffer it as a philosópher.

But thilke wrongès may I not endure

That thou speakest of our goddès here," quoth he.

Cecile answer'd, "O nicè creature!

Thou saidest no word since thou spake to me,

That I ne knew therewith thy nicèty,^d

And that thou wert in every manner wise,

A lewèd officer, a vain justice.

There lacketh nothing to thine outer eyen

That thou n'art blind; for thing that we see all

That is a stone, that men may well espie,

That ilke stone a god thou wilt it call;

I rede^e thee, let thine hand upon it fall,

And test it well, and stone thou shalt it find,

Since that thou seest not with thine eyen blind.

It is a shame that the people shall so scorn thee,

^d Absurdity.

^e Ignorant.

^f Advise.

and laugh at thy folly, for commonly, men know it well, that mighty God is in heaven high, over all; and these images, thou mayest well see, are neither to thee nor to themselves profit: in effect they are worthless." These and other such words she said; and he waxed wroth, and bade men lead her home to her house, and—"In her house," quoth he, "burn her in a bath with red flames." And as he bade, so was the deed done. They shut her fast in a bath, and kept up night and day great fires beneath.

The longe night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathes heat,
She sate all cold, and felt of it no woe,
It made her not a droppe for to sweat.

But in that bath she must leave her life: for he, Almachius, with a wicked purpose, sent his message to slay her in the bath.

The tormentor then smote her three strokes in the neck; but for no kind of chance could he smite her neck quite asunder. And as there was an ordinance at that time, that no man should do unto man such pain as to strike a fourth stroke,

soft or sore,
This tormentor ne durste do no more.

But half dead, with her neck cut, he left her lying, and went on his way. The Christian folk, who were about her, have stopped the blood with sheets. Three days she lived in this torment; and she never ceased to teach the faith she had fostered in them. And she gave them her moveables and her things, and recommended them to the Pope Urban; and said:—"I asked of the King of Heaven to have three days' respite, and no more, to recommend you before I go, these souls, and

that I might found here of my house a perpetual church."

Saint Urban, with his deacons, privily fetched the body, and buried it by night among his other saints decently. Her house was called the church of Saint Cecilia.

Saint Urban hallowed it, as he well might,
In which unto this day in noble wise
Men do to Christ and to his saints service.

REMARKS ON THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.

AMONG the apparent contradictions of the human character none appear to be more striking than its frequent tendency to court the very sufferings, disgrace, and death that are generally shunned with so much solicitude—to be to-day the slave of the grossest superstitions; to-morrow, the martyr asserting successfully not only its independence of all princes and potentates, but putting on with its own hand the fiery crown that betokens a mightier conquest—the sovereignty over self. Yet surely the explanation is as simple as the conclusions to be drawn from it are sublime. Fitted for all imaginable stages of development, from the poor idiot up to him who is indeed but a little lower than the angels—a Plato or a Shakspeare—man, through the operation of a law that compels progress, yet beneficently provides for the periods of rest his waywardness or weakness demands, by lessening the desire with the decrease of the ability to proceed—is ever in a kind of harmony with the work

he sees before him. If that be little, he will become little too, and will grow less through the decay or perversion of his unused or misused powers, and through his conscious or unconscious contempt for and dissatisfaction with his daily life. And if the process be long continued, the evil changes its negative for a positive character, until there be no depths of sensuality, or degradation, or vice, left unsounded by the falling spirit.

In some such position as this do we see man if we look back eighteen and a half centuries ago. We see that he has exhausted the energies that have enabled him under the Roman banners to carry some sort of civilization abroad over the whole known world; and now growing drunk, as it were, with blood, and overburdened with spoil, he falls into a kind of torpor. All sense of decency, or justice, or honour, or public spirit, or religious faith, appear dead within him. Surely he is utterly lost.

Happily, it is not so, never can be so. Let but a new and great idea be placed before him—and see how his whole inner being is illumined—how he starts from his long sleep, or from his idle purposeless wanderings, even from the deepest abysses of self-abasement, and with a strength proportioned to the delay that has taken place, moves resistlessly forward, his whole nature expanding with the consciousness of a hero's work into the true heroic mould; and if at last the cross or the stake bar his way, he accepts that final testimony of his faith as his final triumph—knowing that the very ashes the executioner will scatter to the winds *with all the marks of judicial infamy*, will be like *seed endowed in every particle with the power of*

reproduction, and so raise up a host of martyrs in his place—again to die, and again to originate still more numerous and determined self-sacrificers. Suddenly the despised, down-trodden creed is found to have penetrated into all quarters, and has become too potent to be any longer resisted.

Thus, after the death of Christ, was Christianity first established, and mankind raised from the depths of wretchedness and infamy in which the Roman conquests left them; thus was the subsequent Reformation of Christianity worked out; the minds of the Reformers of the sixteenth century having been nourished by the tales and legends of the sublime devotion of the early Christians. The 'Second Nun's Tale' is a legend of this kind. And it is an interesting question to speculate upon Chaucer's motives in writing it. He has given us in the character of the Poor Parson an example for all time of what a Christian pastor should be; and he has shown us in the characters of Constance, in the Man of Law's Tale; and Griselde, in the Clerk's Tale, what Christ's people should be. On the other hand, he has shown us with a masterly and unsparing hand the state of the Church it was when monks could ride about in rich luxuriance and indolent state—when friars spent their time in ale-houses, ballad-singing, or in intrigues with women, or when such unmitigated scoundrels as the Pardoner and Sumpnour wandered over the land, imposing upon the credulous, bullying the poor, oppressing the poor and friendless, and dissipating all not only with their lives and conversation, but with their authorized direct connexion with the once pure Church of Christ. What more

could Chaucer do to make the what *ought to be*—the *is* of the religious life of England?

He must have known the strength of the powers that were, who supported and believed they throve by these abuses—he must have seen that there would have to be a great, possibly a tragic struggle to overthrow them.

To endeavour, therefore, to strengthen the hearts and elevate the minds of the people for such a struggle, was a task that still remained for him. May it not have been with that view Chaucer took up one of the most popular legends connected with the sufferings of the early English martyrs, and gave to it new vitality and influence by his skill?

The miraculous portion of the Legend of St. Cecilia remains in Chaucer as he found it, that is to say, after the approved pattern of all such compositions. The earliest martyrdoms were narrated simply, as, for instance, that of Stephen in the Bible; but the highly excited state of the imaginations both of those who suffered and of those who witnessed or listened to accounts of martyrdoms, gave rise as early as the second century to the faith that supernatural incidents commonly accompanied them. "These deaths of the primitive martyrs," writes Middleton, "seldom failed of being accompanied by miracles which, as we find them related in the old Martyrologies, were generally copied from each other: concerning sweet smells issuing from their bodies, and their wonderful resistance to all kinds of torture; and the miraculous cures of their wounds and bruises, so as to tire their tormentors by the difficulty of de-

stroying them, which yet, after a vain profusion of miracles, was always effected at the last."

The poet writes, that Valerian

found this holy old Urban anon

Among the *saintes burials* louting,

and that the place was a short distance from Rome on the Via Appia, or Appian Way. There can be no doubt as to the place referred to—the Catacombs, which still form one of the most interesting spots in the vicinity of Rome. The entrance to these subterranean excavations is from the Via Appia, and the visitor presently finds himself groping through long galleries that twist and twine in every direction as if to baffle hostile pursuit, and on each side of the narrow and gloomy way is ranged a triple tier of graves or cells. As he goes on, he finds himself every now and then emerging into large vaulted chambers; and he reflects with no ordinary emotion that he stands where the earliest Christians worshipped—that he has been wandering among the remains of the earliest believers in Christianity. Under what circumstances such burials and such service took place he needs no one to tell him. Fear, flight, persecution are stamped indelibly on all that he sees. We may add that the distance to which these galleries are said to extend is almost incredible; the guides talk of twenty miles!



THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE.



THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE.*

With this Canon I have dwelt seven years, and yet am I never the nearer to my end, for all his science :

All that I had, I have ylost thereby,
And God wot, so have many more than I.
There I was^a wont to be right fresh and gay
Of clothing, and of other good array,
Now may I wear a hose upon mine head ;
And where my colour was both fresh and red,
Now is it wan, and of a leaden hue :
(Whoso it useth, so shall he it rue),

and of my labour yet is my eye bleared. Lo, what advantage it is to multiply ! That sliding science hath made me so bare, that whatever becomes of me I have no goods. And yet I am so indebted of gold through it, that I have borrowed, that whilst I live I shall never be able to repay it.

Let every man beware by me for ever.

Whatever kind of man directs himself to alchemy, if he continue, I hold his prosperity ended.

* Two or three passages from the commencement of this tale have been transcribed in the volume—' Cabinet Pictures of English Life : Chaucer.' in illustration of the character of the Alchemist. But it would injure the tale to omit them here, and they will bear repetition.

^a Whereas I was.

So help me God, thereby shall he not win,
 But empty his purse and make his wittes thin
 And when he through his madness and folly,
 Hath lost his owen good through jeopardy,
 Then he exciteth other folk thereto,

to lose their goods as he himself hath done.
 unto evil men it is joy and comfort to have
 fellows in pain and disease. Thus was I
 taught by a clerk. Of that no matter. I
 speak of our labour.

“ When we be there, as we should exercise
 Our elvish ^f craft, we seemen wondrous wise;
 Our termes be so clerghial ^s and quaint,^h
 I blow the fire till that mine hearte faint.
 What should I tellen each proportion
 Of thinges, which, that we workén upon,
 As on five or six ounces, may well be,
 Of silver, or some other quantity?
 And busy me to tellen you the names,
 As orpiment, burnt bones,

and iron scales,ⁱ

That into powder grounden be full small?
 And in an earthen pot how put is all,
 And salt yput in, and also peppére,
 Before these powders that I speak of here,
 And well ycovered with a lamp of glass?
 And of much other thing which that there w

And of the luting of the pots and glasses, ^s
 no air might pass out? And of the slow fire a
 quick one also that was made?

And of the care and woe,
 That we had in our matters súbliming,

^f Mischievous.

^s Learned.

^h Strang

ⁱ Or thin laminæ of iron.

And in amalgaming, and caleining
 Of quicksilver, ycleped mercury crude?
 For all our sleightès we can not conclude.

But neither our orpiment and sublimed quicksilver,
 nor our litarge ground on porphyry, of each of
 these a certain number of ounces, helpeth us; our
 labour is in vain. Neither the ascension of our
 spirits, nor the matters that lie fixed below, may
 avail us in our working.

For lost is all our labour and travaíl,
 And all the cost, a twenty devil way,
 Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

There is also many another matter appertain-
 ing to our craft, though I cannot rehearse them in
 due order, because I am but an ignorant man.
 Yet though I cannot place them according to their
 nature, I will tell them as they come to mind. As
 bole ammoniac, verdigrease, borax, and sundry
 earthen and glass vessels our
 descensories,* vials, crucibles, and sublimatories,†
 gourds‡ also, and alembics, and other such gear,
 not worth the value of a leek.

What needeth it for to rehearse them all?
 Waters rubifying, and bullès gall,
 Arsenic, sal ammoniac, and brimstóne,
 And herbès, could I tell, eke many one,
 As agremoine, valerian, and lunáry,
 And other such, if that me list to tárry.
 Our lampès burning bothe night and day,
 To bring about our craft if that we may.

* Vessels for the extraction of oil by descension.

† Vessels used by chemists for separating certain parts of
 a body, and driving them to the top of the vessel, in the
 form of a very fine powder.

‡ Gourd-shaped vessels.

Our furnace also for calcination, and the making white of waters, unslaked lime, chalk, and the glaire of an egg, divers powders, ashes, dung, and clay, saltpetre, and vitriol,

And divers fires made of wood and coal.

Sal tartar, alkali, and salt preparate,

And combust' matters and coagulate ;

Clay made with horse and man's hair, and oil

Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, and argoil ;

red arsenic, and other matters imbibed ; and also of the incorporation of our matters, and of the citrination of our silver, our cementing, and fermentation, our ingots, vessels of assay, and many more things.

I will tell you as I was taught also, the four spirits and the seven bodies by order, as I have often heard my lord name them. The first spirit is called quicksilver ; the second, orpiment ; the third, certainly, is sal ammoniac ; and the fourth brimstone.

The seven bodies—Lo, hear them anon. Sol is gold, Luna we call silver, Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver, Saturn lead,

Jupiter is tin,

And Venus copper by my father kin.

Whoso will exercise this cursed craft, he shall have no goods that may suffice him ; for all the goods he spendeth on it

He losen shall : thereof have I no doubt.

Who so that listeth utter his folly

Let him come forth and learnen multiply :

And every man that hath aught in his coffer

Let him appear and wax a philosopher,

as though that craft is so lightly learnt.

Nay, nay, God wot all be he monk or frere,
 Priest or canon, or any other wight,
 Though he sit at his book both day and night
 In learning of this elvish nicè lore,
 All is in vain, and parde muchel more,
 To learn a lewed^d man this subtlety :
 Fie! speakè not thereof, for it will not be.

And knows he literature, or not, he shall find it
 ll one in effect. Both,

by my salvation,
 Concluden in multiplication

qually the same when they have done. That is
 o say, they both fail.

Yet have I forgotten to rehearse of corrosive
 raters, and of filings, and of the mollifying and
 ardening of bodies,

Oilès, ablutions, metals fusible,
 To tellen all would passen any bible,
 at anywhere is; wherefore, as for the best, I
 ill now cease of all these names. As I trow, I
 ave told you enough to raise a fiend, let him look
 ever so grim.

Ah, nay, let be! The philosophers' stone,
 alled elixir, we seek fast each of us, for had we
 im, then were we sure enough.

But unto God of heaven I make a vow,
 For all our craft when we have all ydo^e
 And all our sleight, he will not come us to.
 He hath ymade us spenden muchel good,
 For sorrow of which almost we waxen wood;
 But that good hope creepeth in our heart,
 Supposing ever, though we sorè smart,
 To be relievèd of him afterward.
 Such supposing and hope is sharp and hard,

^d Ignorant.

^e Done.

^f Mad.



I warn you well it is to seeken ever.
 That future *temps* hath madè men dissever,
 In trust thereof, from all that ever they had ;
 Yet of that art they cannot waxen sad,
 For unto them it is a bitter sweet ;
 So seemeth it :

for had they but a sheet to wrap them in by night,
 and a mantle to walk in by day-light, they would
 sell them, and spend it on this art. They cannot
 cease till there be nothing left. And ever more,
 where they go men may know them by the smell
 of brimstone.

For all the world they stinken as a goat ;
 Their savour is so ram-mish, and so hot,
 That though a man a milè from them be
 The savour will infect him, trusteth me.
 Lo, thus by smelling and thread-bare array,
 If that men list, this folk they knowen may
 And if a man will ask them privily
 Why they be clothèd so unthriftilly,
 They right anon will rounen^s in his ear,
 And sayen, if that they espied were
 Men would them slay because of their sciéce :
 Lo, thus these folk betrayen innocence.
 Pass over this ; I go my Tale unto.

Ere that the pot be put on the fire, with a certain
 quantity of metals, my lord tempereth them, and
 he alone. . . . For as men say, he can work
 craftily ; always, I know, he hath such a reputation.
 And yet full often he runneth into blame. And
 know ye how ? full often it so happeneth that the
 pot breaks, and, farewell, all is gone.

These metals be of so great violence,
 Our wallès may not make them résistance,
 But if they weren wrought of lime and stone :
 They piercen so, that through the wall they gone,

^s Whisper.



And some of them sink down into the ground.
 Thus have we lost by times many a pound ;
 And some are scattered all the floor about.
 Some leapen into the roof withouten doubt.
 Though that the fiend not in our sight him shew,
 I trow that he be with us, thilke shrew !
 In helle, where that he is lord and sire,

here is not more woe, ire, or rancour. When
 hat our pot is broken, as I have said, every man
 hides, and considers himself ill-treated. Some
 aid it was through the making of the fire. Some
 aid, "Nay, it was through the blowing:" then
 as I affrighted, for that was my office. "Straw!"
 uoth the third, "ye be ignorant and foolish ;

It was not temper'd as it ought to be ;"
 "Nay," quoth the fourth, "stint and harken me,
 Because our fire was not made of beech,
 hat is the cause, and none other, so may I
 prosper."

I cannot tell whereon it was along,
 But well I wot great strife is us among.

"What?" quoth my lord, "there is no more to
 done ;

Of these perils I will beware eftsoon ;

am right certain, that the pot was cracked. Be
 s be may, be ye nothing amazed. Let us sweep
 he floor quickly, as usual,

Pluck up your heartès, and be glad and blithe."

The rubbish was swept up into a heap, and a
 anvass spread on the floor, and all the rubbish
 brown in a sieve and sifted, and picked over many
 time.

"Pardé," quoth one, "somewhat of our métal
 Yet is there here, though that we have not all ;

And though this thing mishappèd hath as now,
 Another time it may be well enow.
 We musten put our goods in adventure;
 A merchant pardé may not aye endure,
 Trusteth me well, in his prosperity;

Sometimes his goods are drenched in the sea,

And sometime cometh it safe unto the land."

"Peace," quoth my lord, "the next time I will
 to bring our craft in another plight; and unke
 do, sirs, let me bear the blame. There was del
 in somewhat, I know well."

Another said, "The fire was over hot."
 But be it hot or cold I dare say this,
 That we concluden evermore amiss.
 We fail alway of that which we would have,
 And in our madness evermore we rave.
 And when we be together every one
 Every man seemeth a Solomon.
 But all thing which that shineth as the gold
 Ne is no gold, as I have heard it told.

Neither is every apple good that is fair to the
 however men may cry and praise it.

Right so, lo, fareth it amongès us!
 He that seemeth the wisest, by Jesús,
 Is most fool when it cometh to the prefe,^b
 And he that seemeth truest is a thief;
 That shall ye know ere that I from you wend,
 By that I of my tale have made an end.

There was a canon of religion
 Amongès us, would infect all a town,
 Though it as great were as was Nineveh,
 Rome, Alisandre,ⁱ Troy, or other three.
 His sleightès and his infinite falsenèss

^b Proof.

ⁱ Alexandria.

There couldè no man writen, as I guess,
Though that he mighte live a thousand year :

n all the world there is not his equal for falseness.

For in his termès he will him so wind,
And speak his wordès in so sly a kind,
When he communen shall with any wight,
That he will make him doaten anon right,
But ^k it a fiend be, as himselven is.
Full many a man hath he beguil'd ere this,
And will, if that he may live any while.
And yet men go and riden many a mile
Him for to seek, and have his acquaintance,
Not knowing of his falsè governance ;
And if you list to give me audience
I will it tellen here in your presénce.

But, worshipful canóns religiouse,
Ne deemeth not that I slander your house,
Although that my Tale of a canon be :
Of every order some shrew ¹ is pardé ;
And God forbid that all a company
Should rue a singular mannés folly.
To slander you is nothing mine intent,
But to correcten that is 'miss^m I meant.
This Tale was not only told for you,
But eke for other more : ye wot well how
That among Christès apostéles twelve
There was no traitor but Judás himselve ;
Then why should all the remenant have blame
That guiltless were ? By you I say the same ;
Save only this, if ye will hearken me,
If any Judas in your convent be,

I advise you, remove him betimes,

If shame or loss may causen any drede.
And be nothing displeasèd I you pray,
But in this case heark'neth what I say.

^k Except..

¹ Cursed—wicked.

^m Amiss.

In London there was a priest, one of those who
 ng annual masses for the dead,

That therein dwellèd hadde many a year;
 Which was so pleasant and so serviceable
 Unto the wife, there as he was at table,^s
 That she would suffer him nothing to pay
 For board ne clothing, went he never so gay;
 And spending silver had he right enow.

No^r matter for that, I will proceed at once to tell
 my Tale of the Canon that brought this priest unto
 confusion:—

This false canon came upon a day
 Unto the priestes chamber, there^h he lay,
 Beseeching him to lend him a certainⁱ
 Of gold, and he would quit^k it him again.
 “Lend me a mark,” quoth he, “but dayes three,
 And at my day^l I will it quitten thee;

And if it so be that thou find me false another
 day, hang me up by the neck.”

The priest fetched him a mark, and that gladly,
 and the canon thanked him many times, and took
 his leave, and went on his way. And at th
 third day he brought his money,

And to the priest he took his gold again,
 Whereof this priest was wondrous glad and fain.
 “Certes,” quoth he, “nothing annoyeth me
 To lend a man a noble, or two, or three,
 Or what thing were in my possession,
 When he so true is of condition,
 That in no wise he broken will his day:
 To such a man I can never say nay.”

^s Where he boarded.
^k Pay.

^h Where. ⁱ Certain
^l The day appointed.

"What?" quoth this canon. "Should I be untrue?"

Nay, that were thing fallen all of the new.

Truth is a thing that I will ever keep

Unto the day in which that I shall creep

Into my grave, and elles God forbid :

Believe this as certainly as your creed.

God thank I, and in good timè be it said,

That there n'as never man yet evil repaid

For gold ne silver that he to me lent ;

Ne never falsehood in mine heart I meant.

And, sir," quoth he, "now of my privy,

Since ye so goodly have been unto me,

and showed to me such great gentleness, I will, omewhat to repay your kindness, show you, if you please to learn—

"I will you teachen plainly the mannère

How I can worken in philosophy.

Taketh good heed, ye shall well see at eye^m

That I will do a mastery ere I go."

"Yea?" quoth the priest, "yea, sir, and will ye so?"

Marry thereof I pray you heartily."

"At your commandement, sir, truely,"

Quoth the canon, "and elles God forbid."

So, how this thief could manage his service.

Full true it is that such proffered service tinketh, as witness these old wise men ; and I will verify it soon in this canon, root of all treachery, hat ever more hath delight and gladness (such friend-like thoughts reign in his heart)—

^m You shall see with your eyes.

How Christès people he may to mischief bring ;
 God keep us from his false dissimuling !
 Nought wist this priest with whom that he dealt,
 Ne of his harm comíng nothing he felt.
 O silly ^a priest ! O silly innocent,

with covetousness anon thou shalt be shrunk.

O graceless, full blind is thy conceit,^o
 For nothing art thou 'ware of the deceit,
 Which that this fox yshapen hath to thee ;
 His wily wrenches^p thou ne may'st not flee.
 Wherefore to go to the conclusion
 That referreth to thy confusion,
 Unhappy man, anon I will me hie,^q
 To tellen thine unwit and thy folly,
 And eke the falseness of that other wretch,
 As far forth as that my conning^r will stretch.

This canon was my lord, ye wouldeñ ween,^s
 Sir host. In faith, and by the heaven's quecn,
 It was another canon, and not he,
 That can a hundred part more subtilly.
 He hath betrayèd folkès many a time ;
 Of his falsenèss it dulleth me to rhyme.
 Ever when that I speak of his falsehead,
 For shame of him my cheekès waxen red,
 Algatès^t they begynnen for to glow ;
 For redness have I none, right well I know,
 In my viságè, for fumés diverse
 Of metals, which ye have heard me rehearse,
 Consumèd have and wasted my rednèss.
 Now take heed of this canon's cursedness.

" Sir," quoth the canon, " let your yeoman gon "
 For quicksilver, that we it had anon ;^x

^a Simple.

^o Delusion.

^p Stratagems.

^q Haste.

^r Skill.

^s Ye would think.

Always.

^t Go.

^x Have presently.

And let him bringen ounces two or three ;
 And when he cometh, as faster shall ye see
 A wondrous thing, which ye saw never ere this."

" Sir," quoth the priest, " it shall be don ywis."^a
 He bade his servant fetchen him this thing,
 And he all ready was at his bidding,
 And went him forth, and came anon again
 With his quicksilver, shortly for to sayn ;
 And took these ounces three to the canoun,
 And he them laide well and fair adown,
 And bade the servant coalès for to bring
 That he anon might go to his working.

The coals were immediately fetched, and the canon
 took out a crucible from his bosom, and showed it
 to the other.

" This instrument," quoth he, " which that thou
 seest,
 Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein
 Of this quicksilver an ounce, and here begin
 In the name of Christ to wax a philosopher.
 There be full few which that I wouldè proffer
 To shewen them thus much of my sciéce ;
 For here shall ye see by experience
 That this quicksilver I will mortify^a
 Right in your sight anon, withouten lie,
 And make it as good silver and as fine,
 As there is any in your purse or mine,
 Or elleswhere, and make it malleable ;
 And elles holdeth me false, and unable
 Amongès folk for ever to appear.

I have a powder here that cost me dear,

^a Quickly.

^a Certainly.

^a The idea seems to be to *mortify*, to destroy, or effectually
 to, by natural processes to make *decay*, the quicksilver ;
 which is but in other words to resolve it into its elements,
 and thus prepare it for new combinations—as silver.

^b Hold.

Shall make all good, for it is cause of all
My conning,^c which that I you shewen shall.

Send away your man, and let him be without.

And shut the doore while we be about
Our privity, that no man us espy
While that we work in this philosophy.
All, as he bade, fulfilled was in deed.

This same servant anon went out—

And his master shutte the door anon,
And to their labour speedily they gone.
This priest at this cursed canón's bidding
Upon the fire anon he set this thing,
And blew the fire, and busied him full fast.
And this canón into the crosselet^d cast
A powder, n'ot I never whereof it was
Ymade, either of chalk, either of glass
Or somewhat elles, was not worth a fly,

with which to blind the priest; and bade him
hasten to lay the coals above the crucible.

“ for in tokening I thee love
(Quoth this canón) thine owen handès two
Shall worken all thing which that here is do.”
“ *Grand mercy*,” quoth the priest, and was full
glad,
And couched^e the coalès as the canon bade.
And while he busy was, this fiendly wretch,
This false canon (the foule fiend him fetch!)
Out of his bosom took a beechen coal
In which full subtilly was made a hole,

and therein was put an ounce of silver filings, and
the hole was stopped with wax to keep the filings
in.

^c Skill.

^d Crucible.

^e Laid.

And understand that this false snare was not made then, but before, and other things he brought with him, of which I shall tell you more hereafter. He thought to beguile him ere he came there, and so he did before they parted. He could not blind—till he had turned him.^f

It dulleth me, when that I of him speak ;
On his falsehood fain would I me awreak
If I wist how, but he is here and there,
He is so variaunt ^g he abides no where.

But taketh heed, sirs, now for goddès love.
He took his coal, of which I spake above,
And in his hand he bare it privily,
And while the priest couchèd busily
The coales, as I tolde you ere this,
This canon said, " Friend, ye do amiss ;
This is not couchèd as it ought to be,
But soon I shall amenden it," quoth he.
" Now let me meddle therewith but a while,
For of you have I pity by Saint Gile ;^h
Ye be right hot, I see well how ye sweat,
Have here a cloth, and wipe away the wet."

And whiles that the priest wiped his face,
This canon took his coal, with sorry grace,
And laid it above on the midward
Of the crosslet, and blew well afterward,
Till that the coales 'gannen fast to burn.

" Now give us drink," quoth the canon then ;
" all shall be well quickly, I guarantee,
Sitte we down, and let us merry make."

^f Till the canon had turned, he could not blind his victim.
The sportive custom of putting the hand over the eyes of another, whose back is turned, seems here indicated.

^g Of such vagrant habits.

^h Giles.

And when the canon's beechen coal was burnt, all the filings fell out of the hole down into the crucible.

And so it muste needès by reasón,
 Since it above so even couchèd was ;
 But thereof wist the priest nothing, alas !
 He deemed all the coalès ylike good,
 For of the sleight he nothing understood.

And when this alchymistre saw his time,
 " Rise up, sir priest," quoth he, " and stand by me ;
 And for I wot well ingot have ye none,
 Go, walketh forth, and bringeth a chalk stone,
 For I will make it of the samè shape
 That is an ingot, if I may have hap.
 Bring eke with you a bowl or else a pan
 Full of watér, and ye shall well see than,ⁱ
 How that our business shall thrive and preve ;^k
 And yet, for ye shall have no misbelieve,
 Nor wrong conceit of me in your abséce,
 I ne will not be out of your préséce,
 But go with you, and come with you again."

The chamber doore, shortly for to sayn,
 They opened and shut, and went their way,
 And forth with them they carried the key,
 And came again withouten any delay.
 What should I tarryen all the longe day ?
 He took the chalk, and shaped it in the wise
 Of an ingot, as I shall you devise.

I say, he took out of his own sleeve a plate of silver (evil be his end !), which was but just an ounce weight ; and take heed now of his cursed tricks. He shaped his ingot in length and breadth the same, without doubt, as that plate of silver,

ⁱ Then.

^k Succeed—profit.

So silyly, that the priest it not espied;
 And in his sleeve again he 'gan it hide;
 And from the fire he took up his mattère,
 And in the ingot it put with merry cheer;
 And in the water-vessel he it cast,
 When that him list, and bade the priest as fast,
 "Look what there is; put in thine hand and grope;
 Thou shalt there finden silver, as I hope."
 What, devil of helle! should it elles be?
 Shaving of silver, silver is, pardè.

He put his hand in, and took up a teine¹
 Of silver fine; and glad in every vein
 Was this priest, when he saw that it was so;
 "Goddès blessing, and his mothér's alsó,
 And alle hallows,² have ye, sir canón,"
 Saide this priest, "and I their malison;
 But, and ye vouchsafe to teachen me
 This noble craft and this subtilty,
 I will be yours in all that ever I may."

Quoth the canón, "Yet will I make assay
 The second time, that ye may taken heed,
 And be expert of this, and in your need
 Another day assay in mine abséce
 This discipline, and this crafty sciéce.

Let us take another ounce," quoth he then,

"Of quicksilver, withouten wordès mo',
 And do therewith as ye have done ere this
 With that other, which that now silver is."

The priest him busieth all that ever he can,
 To do as this canón, this cursed man,
 Commandeth him, and faste blew the fire,
 For to come to the effect of his desire.
 And this canón right in the meane while
 All ready was this priest eft³ to beguile.

¹ Plate.

² Holy Saints.

³ Again.

And for appearance sake, in his hande bare
 A hollow sticke (take keep, and beware !),
 In the end of which an ounce and no more
 Of silver limasse^o put was, as before
 Was in his coal, and stoppèd with wax well,

in order to keep in every bit of the filings.

And while the priest was engaged, the canon
 with his stick began to address himself to him anon,
 and his powder cast in as he did before.

———— the devil out of his skin
 Him turn, I pray to God, for his falsehede,^p
 For he was ever false in thought and deed.

And with his stick above the crucible, that was ar-
 ranged with this false contrivance,

He stirreth the coalès, till relenten 'gan
 The wax against the fire, as every man,
 But he a fool be, wot well it must need ;

and all that was in the stick went out, and fell
 hastily in the crucible.

Now, good sirs, what will ye better than well?
 When that this priest was thus beguiled again, sup-
 posing only truth, truth to say,

He was so glad, that I can not express
 In no mannere his mirth and his gladnéss,
 And to the canon he proffèred eftsoon
 Body and goods ; " Yea," quoth the canon, " soon :
 Though poor I be, crafty^a thou shalt me find ;
 I warn thee well, yet is there more behind.
 Is there any copper here within?" said he.
 " Yea, sir," quoth the priest ; " I trow there be !

^o Filings.

^p Falsehood.

^a Wise, deeply skilled. But was not the modern meaning already sufficiently known to enable the rascally Canon to enjoy his joke, as well as his ill-gotten gains? The whole passage is executed in a spirit of the most subtle humour.

Else go buy us some, and that quickly. Now, good sir, go forth thy way, and hasten thee." He went and came back with the copper, and the canon took it in his hand.

And of that copper weighèd out an ounce.
Too simple is my tongue to pronounce,
As minister of my wit, the doubleness
Of this canon, root of all cursedness.
He seemed friendly to them that knew him nought,
But he was fiendly, both in work and thought.
It wearieth me to tell of his falseness;
And nathèless yet will I it express,
To that intent men may beware thereby,
And for no other causè truely.

He put this copper into the crucible, and on the fire set it immediately,

And cast in powder, and made the priest to blow,
And in his worken for to stoopen low
As he did erst,^r and all n[']as but a jape;^s
Right as him list the priest he made his ape.
And afterward in—the ingot—he it cast,
And in the panne put it at the last
Of water, and in he put his owen hand,
And in his sleeve, as ye beforen hand^t
Hearde me tell,

he had a silver plate; he slily took it out (this cursed wretch!) the priest unwitting of his false craft, and he left it in the pan's bottom.

And in the water rumbleth to and fro,
And, wondrous privily, took up alsó
The copper teine (not knowing thilke priest)
And hid it, and him hente by the breast,
And to him spake, and thus said in his game,
"Stoopeth adown; by G—, ye be to blame,

^r Before.

^s Trick.

^t Have.

Helpeth me now as I did you whilere.
Put in your hand, and looketh what is there."

This priest took up this silver teine anon;
And thenne said the canon, "Let us gone,
With these three teinès which that we have wrought,
To some goldsmith, and weet if they be aught;
For by my faith I n'oulde for my hood,
But if they weren silver fine and good,
And that as swithe^a well proved shall it be."

Unto the goldsmith with those teinès three,
They went anon, and put them in assay
To fire and hammer. Might no man say nay,[']
But they weren as them ought to be.

This 'sotted^x priest, who was gladdér than he?
Was never bird gladder against the day,
Ne nightingalè, in the season of May
Was never none, that list better to sing,
Ne lady lustier in carolling.
Or for to speak of love and womanhede,
Ne knight in armès done^y a hardy deed,
To standen in grace of his lady dear,
Than hadde this priest this craft for to lere;^z
And to the canon thus he spake and said;
"For the love of God, that for us alle deyed,
And as I may deserve it unto you,
What shall this réceipt cost? telleth me now."

"By our Lady," quoth this canon, "it is dear;
I warn you well, that, save I and a frere,
In Engeland there can no man it make."

"No matter. Now, sir, for God's sake tell me, I
pray you, what I shall pay?"

"Ywis," quoth he, "it is full dear I say."

^a Quickly.

^x Besotted.

^y Who has done.

^z Learn.

Sir, at one word, if that you list it have,
Ye shall pay forty pound, so God me save ;
and were it not for the friendship that ye did ere
this to me, ye should pay more, certainly."

The priest fetched anon the sum of forty pounds
of nobles, and took them to the canon for this receipt : All his working was but deceit and fraud.

" Sir priest," he said, " I wish to have no loss of
my craft ; I would it were kept close. As ye love
me keep it secret.

For if men knewen all my subtlety,
By G—, they woulden have so great envý
To me, because of my philosophy,
I should be dead ; there were no other way."

" God forbid it what ye say !" said the priest.
" Yet had I rather spend all the goods I have (and
I were mad else), than that ye should fall into such
mischief."

" For your good will, Sir, ye have good proof
that it is deserved," quoth the canon, " and—
Farewell. *Grand Mercy.*" He went his way,
and never after that time did the priest see him.
And when that this priest made essay, at such time
as he would—

Of this receipt, farewell ! it n'ould not be.
Lo, thus bejapèd and beguil'd was he.

Thus does this canon introduce himself, to bring
folk to destruction.—Consider, sirs, how in each es-
tate there is warfare betwixt men and gold to such
an extent that there is hardly any gold. This mul-
tiplying so blinds many a one,

That in good faith I trowè that it be
The causè greatest of such scarcity,
These philosóphers speak so mistily
In this craft, that men cannot come thereby

For any wit that men have now-a-days :
 They may well chatteren as do these jays,
 and in their terms set their pleasures and care ;
 But to their purpose shall they ne'er attain.
 A man may lightly learn, if he have aught,
 To multiply and bring his goods to nought.
 Lo, such a lucre is in this pleasant game ; it wil
 turn a man's wit to sorrow,

And empty also great and heavy purses ;
 And maken folk for to purchasen curses
 Of them that have thereto their goods ylent.
 Oh, fie for shame ! they that have been brent,^a
 Alas ! can they not flee the fire's heat ?

Ye that use it, I advise to let it alone,
 Lest ye lose all ; for bet' than never is late :
 Never to thriven were too long a date :
 Though ye prowle aye, ye shall it never find.
 Ye be as bold as is Bayard the blind,
 That blundereth forth,

and peril weigheth not :

He is as bold to run against a stoue
 As for to go besides^b in the way :
 So faren ye that multiply, I say.
 If that your eyen cannot see aright,
 Looketh that your mind lack not his sight.
 For though ye look never so broad and stare

ye shall not win a mite by that traffic, but waste
 all that ye may seize or plunder.

Withdraw the fire, lest it too fast^c brenne ;
 Meddleth no more with that art I mean,
 For if ye do your thrift is gone full clean :

^a Burnt.

^b On one side.

^c Burn.

And I will also immediately tell you what philosophers say in this matter.

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the newè town,
As his Rosàry maketh mention ;
He saith right thus, withouten any lie,
" There may no man mercúry mortify,
But it be with his brother's knowledging."

Lo, how that he which firste said this thing
Of philosophers' father was Hermés ;
He saith how that the dragon doubtless
Ne dieth not, but if that he be slain
With his brother :

And this is to say, he understood by the Dragon—
Mercury, and by his brother—brimstone, both
which were drawn from the sun and the moon. And
therefore, said he, take heed of my saying, " Let
no man busy himself to seek this art, unless he can
understand the intentions and the speech of philo-
sophers. And if he do, he is an ignorant man.

For this sciéce and this conning," (quoth he,)
" Is of the secret of secréts pardé." ^d

Also there was a discípule of Plató,
That on a timè said his master to,
As his book seniör will bear witness,
And this was his demand in soothfastness,
" Tell me the name of thilkè privy stone."

And Plato answered unto him anon ;
" Takè the stone that Titanos men name."
" Which is that ?" quoth he, " Magnesias is the
same,"

^d " He alludes to a treatise entitled *Secreta Secretorum*, which was supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander."—*Tyrrwhitt*.

Saide Plató: "Yea, sir, and is it thus ?

This is *ignotum per ignotius*.

Which is magnesía, good Sir, I pray ?"

"It is a water that is made, I say,
Of the elementès foure," quoth Plató.

"Tell me the rootè, good sir," quoth he tho,*

"Of that watér, if that it be your will."

"Nay, nay," quoth Plato, "certain that I n'ill.^f

The philosophers were sworne every one

That they ne should discover it unto none,

Ne in no book it write in no mannère,

For unto God it is so lefe^g and dear,

That he will not that it discovered be,

except when it pleaseth his Deity to inspire men
with the knowledge, and also to defend those whom
it so pleaseth him to inspire. Lo this is the end.

Then thus conclude I. Since that God of Heaven
will not that the philosophers tell how that a
man may come unto this stone, I advise as for the
best—to let it go.

For whoso maketh God his adversáry,

As for to worken any thing in contráry

Of his will, certès never shall he thrive,

Though that he multiply term of his live.

And there a point ; for ended is my Tale.

God send every good man a remedy for his trouble.

* Then.

^f Will not.

^g Pleasant.

REMARKS ON THE CANON YEOMAN'S TALE.

WHEN Chaucer had settled as the leading idea of his plan for the 'Canterbury Tales,' that a party of pilgrims should journey from London to Thomas à Becket's shrine, and tell each a story by the way, the objection would naturally occur to him as an artist. With all the advantages of the plan, there could be apt to be produced a sense of formality and tediousness by the continuance of an unbroken stream of narrative whose end was not only distinct but exactly defined—therefore leaving nothing to the imagination. In part this objection was got rid of by the remarks and conversation of the pilgrims upon each Tale at its conclusion; and Harry Bailly, the host, was here to fill a conspicuous place, there was sure to be animation, and an unfailing fund of good humour and mirth to fill back upon and enjoy at each of the intervals in question.

But there still lacked incident to break up the too even tenor of the pilgrims' way. Accordingly, Chaucer introduced, in the happiest manner and with the happiest effect, the two characters of the Canon and Yeoman:—

When that tolde was the life of Saint Cecile,
 Ere we had ridden fully five mile,
 At Boughton under Blee we 'gan o'ertake
 A man, that clothed was in cloþes black,
 And underneath he weared a white surplice.
 His hackney which that was all pomele gris,^s

^s Dappled grey.

It soon appears that the Yeoman and his pilgrims ride out of the hostelry, and the master, the Canon; who had hurried the pilgrims in such fiery haste, that

it was joye for to see him sweat. Of course the pilgrims' attention is attracted by the circumstance—they are interested and become still more so as they learn the character of the master from his own servants. They see the former slink off from them—and they have described in the fullest detail the rogues of the Alchemists by one who has been behind

Thus did the Poet-Artist work. How much of his work has been appreciated?

"The introduction," says Tyrwhitt, "of the Canon's Yeoman to tell a tale at a time when many of the original characters remain upon the stage, appears a little extraordinary. It seems that some sudden resentment had induced Chaucer to interrupt the regular course

ture') remarks in the same strain:—"In the year 1405 an Act was passed which made it felonie to multiplie gold and silver, or to use the art of multiplication. If we may believe that Chaucer's life was extended beyond that year, it will not appear improbable that he should have inserted this digression from his original plan, in accordance with the general feeling of the nation on the subject."

Is not this another instance of the fault we have before complained of in Chaucer's admirers, from Spenser downwards? They take him for granted—not study him; and so, to a serious extent, really grow "blind" to his excellences, by dwelling in a kind of vague idea of his "excess of light."

To the masterly exposure of the tricks of the Alchemists Chaucer has given, we shall merely add a few words illustrative of the various other modes they resorted to in the endeavour to cheat their dupes. They soldered gold and silver together, and whitened the gold side with mercury to make that look like silver too, then dropped the whole into the transmuting liquid, where the mercury was dissipated, and, lo! the eager neophyte found a part of his silver changed into a more valuable metal. Again, nails were made of two pieces, one of iron, the other of gold, coated so as to look like iron, and both soldered together; the nails were then dipped into the magic pot, and they too came out with half their baser nature changed into the best virgin gold. A third method was to place at the bottom of the crucible preparations of gold, so skilfully concealed that the crucible appeared empty when examined at the commencement of the experiment.

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

WHEN Phœbus dwellèd here in earth adown,
As olde bookès maken mentioun,
He was the moste lusty bachelor
Of all this world, and eke the best archér.
He slew Phiton the serpent, as he lay
Sleeping against the sun upon a day ;
And many another noble worthy deed
He with his bow wrought, as men mayen read.

Playen he could on every minstrelsy,
And singen, that it was a melody
To hearen of his cleare voice the soun'.
Certes the king of Thebès, Amphioun,
That with his singing wallèd the city,
Could never singen half so well as he.

He was also the seemliest man that ever lived.
What needeth it to describe his features? In this
world there is not one so fair alive. He was also
full of gentleness, honour, and perfect worth.

This Phœbus, that was flower of bachelerie,
As well in freedom as in chivalry,

for his amusement, and in sign of victory over
Phiton, as the story tells us, was wont to bear a
bow in his hand.

Now had this Phœbus in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And taught it speaking, as men teach a jay.

White was this crow as is a snow-white swan ;
 And counterfeit the speech of every man
 He coulde, when he shoulde tell a tale.
 Therewith in all this world no nightingale
 Ne coulde by a hundred thousand del^a
 Singen so wondrous merrily, and well.

Now had this Phœbus in his house a wife
 Which that he loved more than his life ;
 And night and day did ever his diligence
 Her for to please and do her reverence :

ave only, if I say the truth, that he was jealous ;
 nd would have kept her safe ; for he was loth to
 e deceived, and so is every one in such matters.
 but all for nothing. It availeth not. A good
 rife should not be kept under watch ; and truly
 he labour is vain to try to keep an evil one.

This worthy Phœbus does all that he can to
 lease her, believing that through so pleasing her,
 nd on account of his government,

That no man shoulde put him from her grace.
 But God it wot, there may no man embrace—
 As to distrain^b—a thing which that nature
 Hath naturally set in a creature.

Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
 And do all thine intent, and thy courage
 To foster it tenderly with meat and drink,
 Of alle dainties that thou canst bethink,
 And keep it all so cleanly as thou may ;
 Although the cage of gold be never so gay,
 Yet had this bird, by twenty thousand fold,
 Lever in a forest that is wild and cold,
 Go eaten wormès, and such wretchedness.
 For ever this bird will do his business
 To escape out of his cage when that he may :
 His liberty the bird desireth aye.

^a Part.

^b Seize or compel by force.

"Traitor," quoth he, "with tongue of scorpion,
 Thou hast me brought to my confusion;
 Alas, that I was wrought! why n' ere I dead?
 O deere wife, O gem of lusty head,
 That were to me so sad, and eke so true,
 Now liest thou dead, with face pale of hue,
 Full guileless, that durst I swear ywis.

O, hasty hand, to do so foul a wrong! O,
 troubled wit! O, reckless ire, that, unadvised,
 smitest the guiltless. O, Distrust, full of false
 suspicion, where was thy discretion and thy wit?

O, let every man beware of rashness, and be-
 lieve nothing without strong witness. Smite not
 too soon, ere you know why; and be advised well
 and surely before you act upon ire and suspicion.
 Alas! a thousand folk hath hasty rashness undone,
 and brought them into the mire. Alas! for sorrow
 I will slay myself."

And to the crow, "O, false thief," said he;
 "I will thee quit anon thy false tale.
 Thou song whilom, like any nightingale;
 Now shalt thou, false thief, thy song foregone,
 And eke thy white feathers, every one;
 Ne never in all thy life ne shalt thou speak;
 Thus shall men on a traitor be awak.
 Thou and thine offspring ever shall be black,
 Ne never sweete noise shall ye make,
 But ever cry against tempest and rain,
 In token, that through thee my wife is slain."

And to the crow he start, and that anon,
 And pulled his white feathers every one,
 And made him black, and reft him all his song,
 And eke his speech,

and flung him out of the door to the devil. And
 for this cause are all crows black.

Lordlings, by this example, I pray you, never to
 a man in all your life that his wife has wronged!

He will you haten mortally certain.
 Dan Solomon, as wisè clerkes sain,
 Teacheth a man to keep his tonguè well ;
 But, as I said, I am not textuel.
 But nathèless thus taughte me my dame ;
 My son, think on the crow a goddès name.
 My son, keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friend ;
 A wicked tongue is worsè than a fiend :
 My son, from a fiend men may them bless.
 My son, God of his endèless goodnèss
 Wallèd a tongue with teeth, and lippès eke,
 For man should him advisen what he speak.
 My son, full often for too muchel spech
 Hath many a man been spilt,^d as clerkès teach.

My son, thy tonguè shouldest thou restrain
 At alle time but when thou doest thy pain
 To speak of God in honour and prayère.

Right as a sword forcutteth and forcarveth
 An arm a-two, my deare son, right so
 A tongue cutteth friendship all a-two.
 A jangler is to God abominable.

The Fleming saith, and learn, if that thee lest,
 That little jangling causeth muchel rest.
 My son, if thou no wicked word hast said,
 Thee there not dreaden for to be betrayed
 But he that hath missaid, I dare well sayn,
 He may by no way clepe^e his word again.
 Thing that is said is said, and forth it go'th,
 Though him repent, or be him never so loth,
 He is his thrall, to whom that he hath said
 A tale, of which he is now evil repaid.
 My son, beware, and be no author new
 Of tidings, whether they be false or true ;

^d Killed.

• Call.

Where so thou come, amongst high or low,
Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow.

REMARKS ON THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

THE dramatic correspondence of each of the Canterbury Tales to the character of its narrator is tolerably evident in most portions of the poet's great work; and where this correspondence is not so readily conspicuous, it is sure to be still there—latent—deep, perhaps, but still an unquestionable fact. The Manciple is a very “respectable,” gentle, sort of a personage—learned, or belonging to one of the most learned of bodies—a *little* addicted to practices that help rather to fill his purse than develop his moral nature—yet, for that very reason, moral and sententious in his habits and conversation, the better to hide the defect; and, lastly, possessing a kind of quiet subtle humour, to be felt rather than described—just such a humour as one might fancy would grow up in the mind of a man who was accustomed to make alike lords and lawyers his instruments, while appearing to be entirely their submissive, faithful creature, and steward. We can fancy him often chuckling secretly over just such a thought as Chaucer has expressed in the description of the Manciple in the prologue:

Now is not that of God, a full fair grace,
That such a lewèd ‘mannès wit should pass
The wisdom of a heap of learned men?

† Ignorant.

nd the Tale throughout illustrates the same alities. A more respectable hero than Phœbus, a subject more entirely belonging to what is lled learning, than the story which had been told y innumerable writers, from Ovid downwards, no ory-teller need desire, while its consequences,

And for this cause be alle crowès black ;

nd the sententious, sermonizing, yet withal shrewd, orldly, and temporising sort of morality drawn om the Tale, afford full opportunity for the display of the Manciple's humour and moral philosophy. In a word, the Tale, like himself, consists f a small but sly and concentrated *substance*, hich he manages to magnify into a stately and ost imposing shadow.

There is but one passage of such striking poetical xcellence as to make us wonder how it got into nd safely out of his head, and that he has *bor-owed* from a story previously told. The pas- sage—

Take any bird and put it in a cage,

but a repetition, with alterations, of the one in he 'Squire's Tale,' commencing,

As birdès do, that men in cages feed.

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

THERE was, as telleth Titus Livius,
 A knight, that clepèd * was Virginus,
 Fulfilled of honour and worthiness,
 And strong of friendès, and of great richés.
 This knight a daughter hadde by his wife,
 No children had he mo' in all his life.
 Fair was this maid in excellent beauty
 Aboven every wight that man may see :
 For nature hath with sovereign diligence
 Yformèd her in so great excellence,
 As though she woulde say, Lo, I, Natúre,
 Thus can I form and paint a créature,
 When that me list ; who can me counterfeit ?
 Pygmalion ? No, though he aye forge and beat,
 Or grave, or painte : for I dare well say'n
 Apelles, Xeuxis, shoulde work in vain,
 Either to grave, or paint, or forge, or beat,
 If they presumèd me to counterfeit.
 For He that is the former principál
 Hath makèd me his vicar-general,
 To form and painten earthly créatures
 Right as me list, and each thing in my cure is
 Under the moone, that may wane and wax.
 And for my work right nothing will I axe ;
 My lord and I be full of one accord ;
 I made her to the worship of my lord ;
 So do I all mine other créatures,
 What colour that they have, or what figures :—
 This seemeth me that Nature woulde say.

* Called.

Fourteen years of age was this maid in whom Nature had such delight : for just as she can paint a rose red and a lily white, so with such colours she hath painted this noble creature, ere she was born, upon her free limbs, wherever such colours ought to be. And Phœbus hath dyed her great tresses like unto the streams of his burnished heat.

And if that excellent were her beauty,
A thousand fold more virtuous was she.

There lacked no quality in her worthy of discreet praise. She was chaste in spirit as in body ; a virgin flower, who was humble, abstinent, temperate, and patient, and measured in her array and bearing. In her answers she was always discreet. Though she were as wise as Pallas, I dare to say that her eloquence was plain and womanly : she had no counterfeited terms to seem wise ; but in accordance with her rank,

She spake, and all her wordès more and less
Sounding in virtue and in gentleness.
Shamefaced she was in maiden's shamefac'dness,
Constant in heart, and ever in business
To drive her out of idle sluggardy.
Bacchus had of her mouth right no mastry ;
For wine and youthe do Venús increase,
As men in fire will casten oil and grease.
And of her owen virtue unconstrain'd
She hath herself full often sicky feign'd,
For that she woulde flee the company
Where likely was to treaten of folly,
As is at feasts, at revels, and at dances,
That be occasions of dalliances.
Such thingès maken children for to be
Too soone ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is full perilous, and hath been yore :
*For all to soone may she learnen lore
Of boldness, when she waxen is a wife.*

And ye mistresses, in your old age, who have lords' daughters in governance, take not displeasure from my words : think that ye be set in governance of lords' daughters for two things only, either because ye have kept your own honesty, or else because, having fallen in frailty, ye have fully forsaken such evil courses evermore : therefore for Christ's sake look that ye slacken not to teach them virtue.

A stealer of venison, who has entirely left his gluttony and his old craft,

Can keep a forest best of any man :

Now keepeth them well, for if ye will ye can.

Look well that ye assent unto no vice, lest ye be damned for your wicked purposes. Who doth so is certainly a traitor ; and mark what I say, of all treason, the

sovereign pestilence

Is when a wight betrayeth innocence.

Fathers and mothers, yours is the charge of children ; beware that they perish not by example of your living, or by your neglect in chastisement. If they do ye shall suffer for it.

Under a shepherd soft and negligent,

The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.

This maid kept herself, she needed no mistress.

For in her living maidens mighten read,

As in a book, every good word and deed

That 'lougeth to a maiden virtuous.

She was so prudent and so bounteous,

For which the fame out sprung on every side—

Both of her beauty and her bounty wide :

That through the land they praised her each one

That loved virtue, save envy' alone,

That sorry is of other mannès weal,

And glad is of his sorrow and his unheal.

On a day this maiden went in the town towards a temple with her dear mother, as is the custom of young maids.

Now there was a justice in that town who was also the governor of the country. And it so befell that he cast his eyes upon the maid, and earnestly observed her as she came forth by the spot where he stood.

Anon his hearte changed, and his mood,
So was he caught with beauty of this maid ;
And to himself full privily he said,
"This maiden shall be mine for any man."

Anon the fiend into his hearte ran,
And caught him suddenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpose winnen might.
For certes, by no force, ne by no meed,
Him thought he was not able for to speed ;
For she was strong of friendès, and eke she
Confirmed was in such sovereign bounty
That well he wist he might her never win,
As for to make her with her body sin.

So after great deliberation he sent into the town for a churl, whom he knew to be subtle and bold, and told his tale unto him secretly, and made him engage to tell it to no creature ; and if he did he should lose his head. And when this cursed counsel was agreed to, the judge was glad and made great cheer for him, and gave him dear and precious gifts.

When the whole conspiracy was shaped from point to point, how that his will should be performed with all subtlety as ye shall after hear, the churl, who was called Claudius, goes home. This false judge, who was named Appius (for it is no fable but an historical and well known thing, the judgment of the story is true beyond doubt)—this

false judge. . . . soon after on a day, sat in his consistory, as was his wont, and gave judgment upon sundry cases. The false churl then came forth and said, "Lord, if it be your pleasure, do me right upon this piteous bill, in which I complain of Virginius; who if he will say it is not so, I will prove it, and find good witnesses that the bill expresses the truth."

The judge answered, "Of this in his absence I may not give definitive sentence: let him be called, and I will gladly hear. Thou shalt have right and no wrong."

Virginius came to know the judge's pleasure, and then immediately the cursed bill was read; the meaning of it ye shall hear:—

"To you, my lord Sir Appius so dear,
Sheweth your poore servant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Against the law, against all equity,
Holdeth, express against the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thrall by right,
Which from mine house was stolen on a night
While that she was full young, I will it preve
By witness, lord, so that it you not grieve;
She n' is his daughter nought, what so he say.
Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,
Yield me my thrall, if that it be your will:"
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.

Virginius began to look upon the churl. But hurriedly, before he had told his tale, and proved as a knight should, and also by many witnesses, that all that his adversary had said was false, the cursed judge would not wait a moment—nor hear a word more from Virginius, but gave his judgment:—

"I deem^b anon this churl his servant have,
Thou shalt no longer in thine house her save.
Go bring her forth, and put her in our ward.
The churl shall have his thrall; thus I award."

And when this worthy knight, Virginius,
Through sentence of this justice, Appius,
Muste by force his deare daughter given
Unto the judge, in sinfulness to liven;
He goeth him home, and set him in his hall,
And let anon his deare daughter call;
And with a face dead as ashen cold,
Upon her humble face he 'gan behold,
With father's pity sticking through his heart
All would he from his purpose not convert.^c

"Daughter," quoth he, "Virginia by thy name,
There be two wayes, either death or shame,
That thou must suffer; alas that I was bore!
For never thou deservedest wherefore
To dien with a sword or with a knife.
O deare daughter, ender of my life
Which I have fostered up with such pleasance,
That thou were never out of my rémembrance;
O daughter, which that art my laste woe
And in my life my laste joy also;
O gem of chastity, in patience
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentéce;
For love and not for hate thou must be dead,
My piteous hand must smiten off thine head.
Alas, that ever Appius thee say!^d
Thus hath he falsely judged thee to-day."

And then he told her the whole case.

"O mercy, deare father!" quoth this maid.
And with that word she both her armès laid
About his neck, as she was wont to do;
(The tears burst out of her eyen two)

^b I doom.

^c But he would not change his purpose.

^d Saw.

And said, "O goode father, shall I die?
Is there no grace? is there no remedy?"
"No certes, dear daughter mine," quoth he.
"Then give me leisure, father mine," quoth she,
"My death for to complain a little space:
For, parde, Jephtha gave his daughter grace
For to complain, ere he her slew, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was her trespass,
But for she ran her father first to see,
To welcome him with great solemnity."
And with that word she fell aswoon anon;
And after, when her swooning was agone,
She riseth up, and to her father said:
"Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Give me my death ere that I have a shame.
Do with your child your will a Goddès name."
And with that word she prayed him full oft,
That with his sword he woulde smite her soft;
And with that word aswoon again she fell.
Her father, with full sorrowful heart and will
Her head off smote, and by the top it hent,
And to the judge he 'gan it to present,
As he sat yet in doom in cónsistory.

And when the judge saw it, he bade them take
Virginus and hang him instantly. But immediately a thousand people thrust in to save the knight, for pity and grief, for the iniquity was soon known. The people had suspicion in this matter, from the churl's manner of making his claim, that it was done by the assent of Appius: they knew his vice. They go to Appius, and cast him into a prison immediately. And there he slew himself. Claudius was doomed to be hung on a tree; but that Virginus, of his pity, prayed for him, so he was exiled.

REMARKS ON THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

ALTHOUGH Chaucer expressly names Livy as his authority for the version he adopts of the well-known and tragic story of 'Virginus,' it is curious how widely he has departed from the original; and for once, be it said with all due reverence, not to the advantage either of the Tale or the cause of historic truth. We refer to his entire omission of the character of Icilius, the lover of Virginia, whose fidelity and manly courage and high and noble spirit made him in every way worthy of his position among this trio of illustrious unfortunates. Thus when Virginus was first seized in the forum, where, in sheds, the schools of learning were held, and was taken, during the clamour that ensued, to the tribunal of Appius, the rumour of the startling incident that had occurred presently roused Icilius, who with Virginus's uncle, Numitorius, hurried to the spot, forced a way through the crowd, and loudly raised his voice in remonstrance. He was told the sentence had passed that the claimant should keep possession of Virginia until the arrival of Virginus. Of course the whole policy of Appius was at once apparent; and the half-frenzied lover burst out into the following indignant and impassioned appeal:—

"Appius, you must drive me hence with the sword before you shall accomplish in silence what you wish to be concealed. This young woman I intend to wed, and expect to find in her a lawful and chaste wife. Call together, then, even all the

lictors of your colleagues, order the rods and axes to be got ready; the spouse of Icilius shall not remain in any other place than her father's house. Though you have taken from us the protection of tribunes, and an appeal to the Roman people, the two bulwarks which secured our liberty, yet there has been no grant made to your lust of absolute dominion over our wives and daughters. Vent your fury on our persons and our lives; let chastity, at least, find safety. If any violence is offered to her, I shall appeal for succour to the citizens now present in behalf of my spouse; Virginus will appeal to the soldiers in behalf of his only daughter; and all of us to the gods, and to all mankind; nor shall you ever carry that sentence into effect while we have life to prevent it. I charge you, Appius, consider again and again to what lengths you are proceeding: let Virginus, when he comes, determine what measures he will pursue in regard to his daughter; only of this I would have him assured, that if he submits to this man's claim of obtaining the custody of her, he must seek another match for his daughter. As for me, in vindication of the liberty of my spouse, I will forfeit my life sooner than my honour."

The effect of this appeal was visible in the growing fury of the multitude; and Appius saw that he must in some degree avoid—by submitting to—the storm. So he consented that Virginia should be bailed; and Icilius, as defendant in the cause, was called upon for sureties. He, however, delayed, thinking to give more time to the messenger he had despatched to the camp to fetch Virginus; and the multitude, mistaking his motive, and fearing he was at a loss, held up their

hands as if with one impulse, and cried out they were ready to be sureties for Icilius! "To them he replied," says Livy, "tears at the same time filling his eyes, 'I am thankful for your goodness; to-morrow I will claim your assistance; at present I have sufficient sureties.'"

That morrow came that was to witness one of the most sad but heroic acts the long history of the world might afford—Virginia was stabbed by her own father!—and as the latter made his way through all assembled, brandishing the bloody knife of sacrifice, until he had gained the outer gate, with a devoted body of followers, whence he fled to the camp, "Icilius and Numitorius raised up the lifeless body, and exposed it to the view of the people, deploring the villany of Appius, the fatal beauty of the maiden, and the necessity which had urged the father to the act. The matrons who followed joined their exclamations—'Were these the consequences of rearing children—were these the rewards of chastity?' with other mournful reflections such as are suggested by grief to women, and which, from the greater sensibility of their tender minds, are always the most affecting. The discourse of the men, and particularly Icilius, turned entirely on their being deprived of the protection of tribunes, and, consequently, of appeals to the people, and on the indignities thrown upon them all."

And thus, while Virginius stirred up the hearts of his fellow-soldiers in the camp by the awful tale he was the first to bring them news of, and to which his ghastly and sudden appearance among them must have added tenfold force, Icilius raised up in the very heart of the city itself an opposition so for-

midable, that Appius was driven to seek for safety in concealment. Then the army presently marched to the city—the bereaved lover and father again met—the decemvirs, including Appius, were, by order of the senate, compelled to resign their oppressive and in some measure usurped power—and tribunes or magistrates of and for the people were to be elected as of old: among these the foremost were Virginius, Icilius, and Numitorius.

And then, in prison, and hopeless of escape, Appius anticipated his fate by suicide.

SELECTIONS
FROM
THE CANTERBURY TALES.

IN the following selections, the objects sought are to furnish the reader with the means of enjoying Chaucer's rich delineation of comic character, and as much of his consummate management of comic narrative, and incident, and plot, as are compatible with the expurgation of all those grossnesses which, however excusable in the fourteenth century, are not for a moment to be tolerated beyond the library of the student in the nineteenth.

THE MILLER'S TALE.

THERE was once dwelling in Oxford a rich miser, who took guests to board. He was a carpenter by his craft. With him there dwelled a poor scholar learned in the arts, but whose whole fancy was turned towards learning astrology. He could discover certain conclusions, if interrogated in certain hours—when there should be drought or rain, or if men asked him what should happen, of every thing.

This clerk was clepèd handy Nicholas ;
 Of derne ^a love he could and of solace ;
 And thereto he was sly and full privy
 And like a maiden meeke for to see.
 A chamber had he in that hostelry
 Alone, withouten any company,
 Full fetisly ydight with herbes sote.^b
 And he himself was sweet as is the root
 Of liquorice, or any setewale.^c
 His alma-geste,^d and bookès great and small,
 His astrolabè, ^elonging for ^fhis art,
 His augrim^f stonès, laying fair apart
 On shelvès couchèd at his beddès head,
 His press ycovered with a falding ^gred.

^a Secret.

Handsomely dressed and ornamented with sweet herbs.

^c Valerian.

^d The name given by the Arabs to the celebrated work of the Alexandrian astronomer, Ptolemy.

^e Belonging to.

^f The pebbles or counters anciently used in numeration.

^g A coarse cloth.

And all above there lay a gay sautrie^b :
 On which he made on night's melody :
 So sweetly that all the chamber rung :
 And *Angelus ad virginem* he sung.
 And after that he sung the king's note ;
 Full often blessed was his merry throat.
 And thus this sweete clerk his time spent
 After his friend's finding and his rent.

This carpenter had wedded new a wife, :
 Which that he loved more than his life.
 Of eighteen year she was, I guess of age.
 Jealous he was, and held her narrow in cage,
 For she was wild and young, and he was old.

He knew not Cato (for his wit was rude), who
 made that a man should wed one like to himself.
 Men should wed in accordance with their state ;
 For youth and age are often at issue.

Fair was this young wife, and her body as pretty
 and small as any weasel's. She wore a girdle, all
 arrayed with silken stripes, and an apron as white
 as new milk upon her loins, with many a gore in
 it. Her smock was white, and embroidered in
 front, and also on her collar behind, with coal-
 black silk inside and out. The tapes of her white
 apron were of the same suit to her collar. Her fillet
 of silk was broad, and set high on her head. And
 certainly she had a roguish eye.

Full small yepulled were her brows two,
 And they were bent and black as any sloe.

It was a greater delight to look on her than on the
 few pear-tree ; she was softer than the wool of a
 wether.

By her girdle hung a leathern purse, tasselled

^b Or psaltery, a musical stringed instrument.

with silk and inlaid with brass. In all this world—to seek up and down—there is no man could find any where else so gay a poppet, or so sweet a wench. Brighter was the shining of her hue than of the newly forged noble¹ in the Tower. As to her song, it was as loud and brisk as any swallow's sitting on a barn.

Thereto she coude skip, and make a game
As any kid or calf following his dame.

Her mouth was as sweet as braket^k or mead, or
hoard of apples laid in hay or heath.

Wincing she was as is a jolly colt
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.

A brooch she bare upon her low collar, as broad
as the boss of a shield.

Her shoes were laced on her leggès high,
she was a primrose, a darling,¹ for any lord or good
person to marry. [Nicholas falls in love with her,
but the carpenter's wife has also another admirer.]

It happened that upon a holyday the good wife
went to the church: her forehead shining as bright
as any morning, so was it washed when she left her
labour. Now there was of that church a parish
clerk named Absolon. Curled was his hair, and
shining like gold, and floating abroad like a large
fan. Full straight and even lay his jolly locks.
His complexion was red, his eyes as grey as geese,
and his shoes had Paul's windows^m carved on them.

¹ The gold coin.

^k A peculiarly sweet drink made of the wort of ale, honey,
and spice, said to be still known in Wales.

¹ A primerole, a "piggesnie."

^m Ornaments imitative of the windows of St. Paul's.

In red hose he went full smartly. He was clad little and properly, in a kirtle of light waget,^a thickly and fairly set with points. And upon this he had a gay surplice, as white as is the blossom on the hawthorn.

A merry child he was, so God me save ;
 Well could he letten blood, and clip, and shave ;
 And make a charter of land, and a quittance.
 In twenty manner could he trip and dance,
 (After the school of Oxenfordè though,)
 And with his leggès casten to and fro ;
 And playen songès on a small ribible ;^o
 Thereto he sung sometimes a loud quibble.
 And as well could he play on a gittérn.

In all the town there was neither tavern nor brew-house kept by a gay tapster, that he visited not with his sport.

This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
 Go'th with a censer on the holyday,
 Censing the wivès of the parish fast ;
 And many a lovely look he on them caste,
 And namely ^p on this carpenterès wife :
 To look on her he thought a merry life.
 She was so proper and sweet,

and pleasing,

I dare well say, if she had been a mouse,
 And he a cat, he would her hent ^q anon.

This parish clerk, this jolly Absolon,
 Hath in his heartè such a love-longíng,
 That of no wife took he no offering ;
 For courtesy, he said, he n'oulde none.

* * * *

^a Supposed to be cloth manufactured at Watchet in Somersetshire.

^o A musical instrument.

^p Especially.

^q Seize.

From day to day this jolly Absolon
 So loveth her that him is woe-begone.
 He waketh all the night and all the day ;
 He combeth his lockes broad, and made him gay.

He wooeth her by messengers ;

And swore he woulde be her owen page.

He singeth, quavering, as a nightingale. He sent
 her pins, mead, spiced ale, and cakes^p hot out of
 the fire.

Sometimes to show his lightness and skill, he
 played Herod on a high scaffold. But what
 availed it? She loveth Nicholas.

[The lovers meet, and arrange their plans for
 the future, so as to include the disposal of the un-
 fortunate dupe, the husband, without exciting his
 suspicion.]

Nicholas carries secretly into his chamber meat
 and drink for a day or two, and bade Alison say
 to her husband, if he asked after Nicholas, that
 she knew not where he was, that she had not seen
 him all the day—that she believed some malady
 was upon him, for that to none of her maiden's
 cries to him would he answer, no matter what
 might happen.

Thus passeth forth all thilke Saturday,
 That Nicholas still in his chamber lay,
 And ate, and slept, and dide what him list
 Till Sunday, that the sun goeth to rest.

This silly^q carpenter hath great marvaille
 Of Nicholas, or what thing might him ail,
 And said, " I am adread by Saint Thomás
 It standeth not aright with Nicholas :
 God shielde that he died suddenly.
 This world is now full tikel sikerly^r

^p " Wafers." ^q Simple.

^r Tikel sikerly—uncertain surely.

I saw to-day a corpse yborne to church,
That now on Monday last I saw him worche.
Go up (quoth he unto his knave) anon ;
Clepe ^v at his door, or knocke with a stone :
Look how it is, and tell me boldely."

This knavè go'th him up full sturdily,
And at the chamber-door while that he stood
He cried and knockèd as that he were wood :^u
" What how ? what do ye, Master Nicholay ?
How may ye sleepe all the longe day ?"
But all for nought, he hearde not a word .
A hole he found full low upon the board,
There as the cat was wont in for to creep,
And at that hole he lookèd in full deep
And at the last he had of him a sight.

This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
As he had kyked ^v on the newe moon.

Adown he go'th, and telleth his master soon,
In what array he saw this ilke man.

This carpenter to blessen him began,
And said ; Now help us Sainte Frideswide
A man wot little what shall him betide.

This man is fallen with his astronomy
In some woodnéss ^x or in some agony.
I thought aye well how that it shoulde be,
Men should not know of Goddès privity.

Yea blessed be alway a lewèd ^v man
That nought but only his Believè ^x can.

So fared another clerk with astronomy
He walkèd in the fieldès for to pry
Upon the starrès, what there should befall,
Till he was in a marlèpit yfall :

He saw not that. But yet by Saint Thomás,
Me rueth sore of handy Nicholas :

^v Work. ^t Call. ^u Mad.
^v Gazed. In brief, the line means Nicholas was moon-
ruck.

^x Madness. ^y Ignorant.

^x His Belief, or Catechism.

He shall be rated of his studying
If that I may, by Jesus, Heaven-king.

Get me a staff, that I may underspore^a
While that thou, Robin, hevest off the door:
He shall out of his studying, as I guess."
And to the chamber door he gan him 'dress.
His knavè was a strong carl for the nones,^b
And by the hasp he hove it off at ones;
Into the floor the doore fell anon.

This Nicholas sat aye as still as stone,
And ever he gaped upward into the air.

This carpenter ween'd he were in despair,
And hent^c him by the shoulders mightily,
And shook him hard, and cried piteously;
"What, Nicholas? what how man? look adown:
Awake, and think on Christès passion.
I crouche^d thee from elvès, and from wightès."
Therewith the nightspell said he anon rightès,
On foure halvès of the house about
And on the threshold of the door without,—
"Jesu Christ, and Sainte Benedight,
Bless this house from every wicked wight,
From the nightmare, the witch's paternoster;
Where wonest^e thou Saint Peter's suster.^f"

And at the last this handy Nicholas
'Gan for to siken^g sore, and said; "Alas!
Shall all the world be lost eftsoonès^h now?"

This carpenter answered; "What sayest thou?
What? think on God, as we do, men that swinke."ⁱ

This Nicholas answered; "Fetch me a drink;
And after will I speak in privy
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I will tell it no other man certain."

This carpenter go'th down, and cometh again,

^a Raise, by putting a spear or pole under it.

^b Occasion.

^c Caught

^d Mark thee with the cross. ^e Dwellest. ^f Sister.

^g Sigh.

^h Presently.

ⁱ Labour.

And brought of mighty ale a large quart ;
 And when that each of them had drunken his part,
 This Nicholas his doore faste shette,^h
 And down the carpenter by him he set.
 And saide ; " John, mine hoste lefeⁱ and dear
 Thou shalt upon thy truthe swear me here,
 That to no wight thou shalt my counsel 'wrey :^k
 For it is Christes counsel that I say.

And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore : ^l
 For this vengeance thou shalte have therefore,
 That if thou 'wreye me, thou shalt be wood."^m

" Nay, Christ forbid it for his holy blood !"
 Quoth then this silly man ; " I am no labbe,ⁿ
 Ne though I say it, I n'am not lefe to gabbe.^o
 Say what thou wilt, I shall it never tell
 To child nor wife, by him that harried^p hell."

" Now, John, (quoth Nicholas) I will not lie,
 I have yfound in mine astrology,
 As I have looked in the moone bright,
 That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
 Shall fall a rain, and that so wild and wood^q
 That half so great was never Noah's flood.
 This world (he said) in less than in an hour
 Shall all be drench'd,^r so hideous is the shower :
 Thus shall mankinde drench and lose their life."

This carpenter answer'd ; " Alas my wife !
 And shall she drenche ? alas mine Alisoun ;"
 For sorrow of this he fell almost adown,
 And said ; " Is there no remedy in this case ?"
 " Why yes, for God," quoth handy Nicholas ;
 " If thou wilt worken after lore and rede ;^s
 Thou mayest not worken after thine owen head.
 For thus saith Solomon, that was full true ;
 Work all by counsel, and thou shalt not rue.

^h Shut.ⁱ Pleasant.^k Betray.^l Utterly lost.^m Mad.ⁿ Blabber.^o Or, in other words, fond of chattering.^p Harassed, subdued.^q Mad^r Drown'd.^s Counsel.

And if thou worken wilt by good counceil
 I undertake, withouten mast or sail,
 Yet shall I saven her, and thee and me.
 Hast thou not heard how savèd was Noé
 When that our Lord had warnèd him beforne
 That all the world with water should be lorne ?"^t
 " Yes (quoth this carpenter) full yore ago."
 " Hast thou not heard (quoth Nicholas) also,
 The sorrow of Noah with his fellowship,
 Or that he might get his wife to ship ?
 Him had be lever," I dare well undertake,
 At thilke time, than all his weathers black
 That she had had a ship herself alone.
 And therefore wott'st thou what is best to done ?
 This asketh haste, and of a hasty thing
 Men may not preach and maken tarrying.
 Anon go get us fast into this inn
 A kneading trough or elles a kemelin^v
 For each of us ; but look that they be large
 In which we mayen swim as in a barge :
 And have therein victuaillè suffisant
 But for a day ; fie on the remenant.
 The water shall aslake^w and go away
 Abouten prime upon the nexte day.
 But Robin may not weet of this, thy knave,
 Ne eke thy maiden Gill I may not save :
 Askè not why : for though thou askè me,
 I will not tellen Goddès privity.
 Sufficeth thee, but if thy wittès mad,^x
 To have as great a grace as Noah had.
 Thy wife shall I well saven out of doubt.
 Go now thy way, and speed thee hereabout.
 But when thou hast for her, and thee and me
 Ygetten us these kneading tubbès three,

^t Lost.^u Rather.^v A tub.^w Slacken.

^x That is to say, Unless thy wit (judgment) be mad or senseless.

Then shalt thou hang them in the roof full high,
 That no man of our púrveyance espy.
 And when thou hast done thus as I have said,
 And hast our victuaille fair in them ylaid,
 And eke an axe to smite the cord a-two
 When that the water cometh, that we may go
 And break a hole on high upon the gable
 Unto the garden ward, over the stable,
 That we may freely passen forth our way,
 When that the greate shower is gone away,
 Then shalt thou swim as merry, I undertake,
 As doth the whitè duck after her drake :
 Then will I clepe, how Alison ! how John !
 Be merry ; for the flood will pass anon.
 And thou wilt say, Hail, master Nicholay,
 Good morrow, I see thee well, for it is day !
 And then shall we be lordès all our life
 Of all the world, as Noah and his wife.
 But of one thing I warne thee full right
 Be well advisèd on that ilke night
 That we be entered into shippès board
 That none of us ne speakè not one word,
 Ne clepe, ne cry,⁷ but be in his prayère :
 For it is Goddès owen heste dear.
 This ordinance is said ; go, God thee speed.
 To morrow at night, when men be all asleep,
 Into our kneading tubbès will we creep,
 And sitten there, abiding Goddès grace.
 Go now thy way, I have no longer space
 To make of this no longer sermoning :
 Men sayen thus : ' Send the wise, and say no thing :
 Thou art so wise, it needeth thee nought teach.
 Go, save our lives, and that I thee beseech.'"
 This silly carpenter go'th forth his way,
 Full oft he said alas ! and wala wa !
 And to his wife he told his privity,
 And she was 'ware,⁸ and knew it bet' a than he.

⁷ Call.⁸ Aware.⁹ Better.

CANTERBURY TALES.

What all this quaint^b cast^b was for to say,
But natheless she fared as she would day,^c
And said; "Alas! go forth thy way anon,
Help us to 'scape, ere we be dead each one.
I am thy true very wedded wife;
Go, deare spouse, and help to save our life."

Lo, what a great thing is affection,
Men may die of imagination,
So deepe may impressions be take.
This silly carpenter beginneth quake.
Him thinketh verily that he may see
Noah's flood come wallowing as the sea
To drenchen Alison, his honey dear;
He weepeth, waileth, maketh sorry cheer;
He siketh,^d with full many a sorry swough,^e
He goeth and getteth him a kneading trough,
And after a tub, and a kemelin,
And privily he sent them to his ian:
And hung them in the roof in privy.
His owen hand then made he ladders three,
To climben by the renga^f and by the stalks,
Unto the tubbes hanging in the balks;
And victualled bothe kemelin, trough, and tub
With bread and cheese, and good ale in a jubl^g
Sufficing right enow as for a day.

But ere that he had made all this array
He sent his knave, and eke his wench also,
Upon his need to London for to go.
And on the Monday, when it drew to night
He shut his door, withouten candle light,
And dressed all thing as it shoulde be;
And shortly up they clomben alle three,
They sitten stille well a furlong way,
Now, *Pater Noster*, clum,^h said Nicholas,

^b Strange contrivance.

^c *Fared*—behaved as she would day—di

^d *Sigheth*. ^e Sound. ^f The steps of th

^g The ancient term for a vessel used for holding s

^h *Clum*. This word, it is supposed, is m

And clum, quoth Jehn, and clum, said Alison ;
 This carpenter said his devotion
 And still he sit, and biddeth his prayere,
 Awaiting on the rain, if he it hear.

[The carpenter from very weariness falls asleep, and his wife's other lover, Absolon, believing him absent, comes at the same time to woo her. The lovers in the dark make sport of him, and he in evenge gets a hot coulter and smites Nicholas with it.] As he were mad from woe he began to cry,

“ Help, water ! water ! help for Goddès heart.”

This carpenter out of his slumber start,
 And heard one cry for water ! as he were wood ;ⁱ
 And thought, alas, now cometh Noah's flood ;
 He set him up withouten wordes mo,
 And with his axe he smote the cord atwo,
 And down goeth all.

Up starten Alison and Nicholay,
 And crieden out and harow ! in the street.

The neighbours, both small and great, run in, to
 aze upon the carpenter, who yet lay in a swoon,
 ale and wan, for he had broken his arm with the
 ill.

But standen he must unto his owen harm,
 For when he spake, he was anon bore down
 With handy Nicholas and Alisoun.
 They tolden every man that he was wood ;ⁱ
 He was aghaste so of Noah's flood
 Through fantasie, that of his vanity
 He had ybought him kneading tubbès three,

ness the murmuring noise made by a congregation in accompanying the prayers of the Church service, which they cannot or do not perfectly repeat.

Mad.

And had them hangèd in the roof above ;
And that he prayèd them for Goddès love
To sitten in the roof *par compaignie*.

The folk gan laughen at his fantasy.
Into the roof they kyken^{*} and they gape,
And turnèd all his harm into a jape.
For what so that this carpenter answer'd
It was for nought, no man his reason heard.
With oathès great he was so sworn adown,
That he was holden wood in all the town.
For every clerk anon right held with other ;
They said, the man was wood, my levè¹ brother
And every wight gan laughen at this strife.

^{*} Stare.

¹ Dear.

THE REVE'S TALE.

WHEN folk have laughèd at this nicè case
 Of Absolon and handy Nicholas,
 Diversè folk diversèly they said,
 But for the morè part they laughed and played.
 Ne at this tale I saw no man him grieve,
 But it were only Osèwold the Reve.
 Because he was of carpentères craft,
 A little ire is in his heart ylaft;
 He gan to grudge and blamen it a lite.*

So may I prosper,

Quoth he, full well could I him quit
 With blearing of a proud millères eye,
 If that me list to speak of ribaldry.
 But I am old; me list not play for age;
 Grass time is done, my fodder is now forage.
 This whitè top writeth minè olde years;
 Mine heart is also moulded as mine hairs.

* * * *

But,

We olde men I dread, so faren we
 Till we be rotten, can we not be ripe;
 We hop alway, while that the world will pipe.

Then we may no longer do, then will we speak.
 In the cold ashes still reeks the fire.

Four fiery sparks have we, as I shall explain—
 Casting, lying, anger, and covetousness. These
 Our sparks belong unto age. Our old limbs are
 Now unwieldy, but the will shall not fail, that is

* Little.

truth. It is many a year since my tap of life began to run.

For sikerly,^b when I was born, anon
 Death drew the tap of life, and let it gone :
 And ever since hath so the tap yrun
 Till that almost all empty is the tun.
 The stream of life now droppeth on the chimbe ;^c
 The silly tongue may well ring and chime,
 Of wretchedness, that passed is full yore :
 With olde folke, save dotage, is no more.^d

Now, Sirs, quoth Osewald the Reve, I pray you that
 I may not annoy you, although I answer, and
 somewhat set his cap.

For lawful is with force, force off to shove.

This drunken miller hath ytold us here,
 How that beguiled was a carpenter
 Peradventure in scorn, for I am one :
 And by your leave, I shall him quit anon.
 Right in his churl's termes will I speak,
 I pray to God his necke might to-break.
 He can well in mine eye seen a stalk,
 But in his own he cannot seen a balk.

At Trompington, not far from Cambridge, there
 goeth a brook, and over that a bridge, on which
 brook there stands a mill. This is true {that I
 tell you. A Miller dwelt there this many a day ;
 he was proud and fine as a peacock ; he could pipe,
 and fish, and cast nets, turn cups (with a lathe),
 wrestle well, and shoot. Ever by his belt he
 carried a long pavade,^e and full trenchant was the

^b Certainly.

^c The middle or prominent part of the barrel.

^d Or, in other words, with old folk there is nothing but
 dotage.

^e Some unknown weapon of offence, says Tyrwhitt. Mr.
 Horne renders it a Norman dirk.

dge of his sword. He bore a jolly dagger in his
ouch. For the peril no man durst touch him.
l Sheffield knife was in his hose. His face was
ound and his nose flat.

As pilled as an apè was his skull.

Ie was a market swaggerer, when it was crowded.
There durst no wight lay hand upon him, that the
filler did not swear anon he should suffer for it.

A thief he was forsooth, of corn and meal,
And that a sly, and usèd for to steal.

By name he was called Disdainful Simkin.

A wife he had, comen of noble kin :
The parson of the town her father was.
With her he gave full many a pan of brass,
For that Simkin should in his blood ally.
She was yfostered in a nunnery :
For Simkin would no wife, as he said,
But ' she were well ynourished, and a maid,
' To saven his estate of yeomanry.
And she was proud, and pert as is a pie.^s
A full fair sight was it upon them two :
On holy days before her would he go
With his tippét ybound about his head ;
And she came after in a gite^b of red,
And Simkin hadde hosen of the same.
There durste no wight clepen her but dame.
Was none so hardy, that went by the way,
That with her durste rage or onès play,
But if he would be slain of Simèkin
With pavade, or with knife, or bodekin ;^t

for jealous folk be ever perilous, always they
ould have their wives believe that) ; and also,

^t Unless. ^s Magpie. ^b Gown.
^t Dagger ; as in Hamlet, the " bare bodkin."

because she was somewhat fond of lewd jests.
 was as proud as water in a ditch, and full of haug-
 ness and abuse. She thought that a lady sh-
 spare her on account of her kindred, and her
 cation that she had learned in the nunnery.

A daughter hadden they betwixt them two
 Of twenty year, withouten any mo',
 Saving a child that was of half-year age,
 In cradle it lay, and was a proper page.
 This wenche thick and well ygrowen was,
 With camuse^j nose, and eyen grey as glass ;

but I will not lie, her hair was very beautiful.

The parson of the town, for she was fair,
 In purpose was to maken her his heir,
 Both of his cattle, and of his messuage,
 And strange he made it of her marriage.^k
 His purpose was for to bestow her high
 Into some worthy blood of ancestry.
 For holy church's good must be dispended^l
 On holy church's blood that is descended.
 Therefore he would his holy blood honour,
 Though that he holy churche should devour.

Great soken^m hath this miller out of doubt
 With wheat and malt, of all the land about ;
 And namelyⁿ there was a great collége
 Men clepe^o the Soler Hall at Cantebrege,^p
 There was their wheat and eke their malt ygr-

And on a day it happened, suddenly, that
 manciple lay sick in an illness—men beli-
 certainly that he should die.

^j Flat.

^k That is to say, kept the subject distant as one in v
 he wished nothing to be done.

^l Expended.

^m Toll.

ⁿ Especially.

^o Call.

^p Cambridge.

For which this miller stole both meal and corn
 An hundred times more than befor.
 For theretefore he stole but courteously,
 But soon he was a thief outrageously ;

r which the warden chid, and made a great stir.
 ut the miller minded not a tare : he cracked
 oud, and swore it was not so.

Then were there two young poor scholars, that
 velt in the hall of which I speak. Headstrong
 ey were, and lusty in their sport. For mere
 irth and revelry they cry busily unto the warden
 give them leave but for a little while to go to
 e mill and see their corn ground, and they durst
 oldly lay their necks at stake that the miller
 ould not steal half a peck from them by sleight,
 or by force rob them.

And at the last the warden gave them leave :
 John hight^p that one, and Alein^q hight that other,
 Of one town were they born, that highte Strother,
 Far in the North, I cannot tellen where.

This Alein maketh ready all his gear,
 And on a horse the sack he cast anon ;
 Forth goeth Alein the clerk, and also John,
 With good sword and with buckler by their side.
 John knew the way, him needed not no guide,
 And at the mill the sack adown he lay'th.

Alein spake first ; " All hail, Simond, in faith,
 How fares thy faire daughter and thy wife ? "

" Alein, welcome (quoth Simkin), by my life,
 And John also : how now, what do ye here ?
 By G—, Simond (quoth John), need has no peer.
 Him behoves serve himself that has no swain,
 Or else he is a fool, as clerkes say'n.
 Our manciple—I hope^r he will be dead,

^p Was named.

^q Or Allen.

^r Expect.
 L 3

so [slowly] work the grinders in his mouth, and therefore am I come, and Alein also, to grind our corn, and carry it home again; I pray you therefore speed us hence as soon as ye may.

“It shall be done (quoth Simkin) by my faith,
What will ye do while that it is in hand?”
“By G—, right by the hopper will I stand,
(Quoth John) and see how that the corn goes in;
Yet saw I never, by my father’s kin,
How that the hopper waggès to and fro.”

Alein answered; “John, and wilt thou so?
Then will I be beneath, by my crown,
And see how that the meale falls adown
Into the trough; that shall be my disport;
For John, in faith, I may be of your sort:
I is as ill a miller as is ye.”

This miller smiled at their nicety,
And thought, all this n’ is done but for a wile.
They weenen that no man may them beguile;
But by my thrift yet shall I blear their eye,
For all the sleight in their philosophy.
The morè quainte knackès that they make
The morè will I steal when that I take.
Instead of flour yet will I give them bren,
The greatest clerks be not the wisest men.
As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare,
Of all their art ne count I not a tare.

Out at the door he goeth full privily,
When that he saw his time, softly
He looketh up and down, till he hath found
The clerkès horse, there as he stood ybound
Behind the mill, under a levesell:
And to the horse he go’th him fair and well,
And strippeth off the bridle right anon.

And when the horse was loose, he ’gan to gone¹

¹ * Supposed to mean a kind of leafy arbour, but the explanation is a very doubtful one.

¹ Begun to go.

Toward the fen, there wilde marès run,
 And forth with "wehee" through thick and thin.
 This miller go'th again, no word he said,
 But doth his note, and with these clerkès played,
 Till that their corn was fair and well yground.
 And when the meal is sacked and ybound,
 This John go'th out, and finds his horse away,
 And 'gan to cry, "Harow and wala wa!
 Our horse is lost: Alein, for Goddès bones,
 Step on thy feet; come off, man, all at ones."
 Alas! our warden has his palfrey lorn."

This Alein all forgot both meal and corn;
 All was out of his mind his husbandry:
 "What, whilk way is he gone?" he 'gan to cry.

The wife came leaping inward at a renne;
 She said; "Alas! your horse go'th to the fen
 With wilde mares, as fast as he may go.
 Unthank come on his hand that bound him so,
 And he that better should have knit the rein."

"Alas! (quoth John) Alein, for Christès pain
 Lay down thy sword, and I shall mine also.

am as active, God knows, as is a deer. By G—'s
 oul he shall not escape us both. Why didst thou
 ot put the horse in the barn? Ill hail! Alein,
 y G— thou is a fool."

These silly clerkès have full fast yrun
 Toward the fen, both Alein and eke John:
 And when the miller saw that they were gone,
 He half a bushel of their flour hath take,
 And bade his wife go knead it in a cake.
 He said; "I trow, the clerkès were afeard,
 Yet can a miller make a clerkès beard,
 For all his art. Yea, let them go their way:
 Lo, where they go. Yea, lèt the children play:

Once.

▼ Lost.

▼ Run.

They get him not so lightly by my crown."

These silly clerkès runnen up and down
With "Keep! keep! stand! stand! jassa! warde-
rere!

Go whistle thou, and I shall keep him here."

But shortly, till that it was very night
They coulde not, though they did all their might,
Their capel* catch, he ran alway so fast;
Till in a ditch they caught him at the last.

Weary and wet, as beastès in the rain,
Cometh silly John, and with him cometh Alein,
"(Alas! (quoth John) the day that I was born!

Now we are driven to scorn and contempt. Our
corn is stolen; men will call us fools, both the
warden, and all our fellows, and especially the
miller. Wo is me!"

Thus complaineth John as he goes by the way
towards the mill, and the horse in his hand. He
found the miller sitting by the fire, for it was
night, and they could go no further; so for the
love of God they besought lodging of him, and
accommodation,

as for their penny.
The miller said again, "If there be any,
Such as it is, yet shall ye have your part;
My house is strait, but ye have learned art;
Ye can by arguments maken a place
A milè broad, of twenty foot of space.
Let see now if this placè may suffice,
Or make it room with speech, as is your guise."
"Now, Simond (said this John), by Saint Cuthbért,
Aye is thou merry, and that is fair answered.
I have heard say, man shall take of two things
S'likè† as he finds, or s'likè† as he brings.
But 'specially I pray thee, hoste dear,
Gar‡ us have meat and drink, and make us cheer,

* Horse.

† Such like.

‡ Let.

And we shall payen truly at the full :
 With empty hand, men may no hawkès tull,^a
 Lo here our silver ready for to spend."

This miller to the town his daughter send,
 For ale and bread, and roasted them a goose,
 And bound their horse, he should no more go loose,
 And in his own chambér them made a bed,
 With sheetès and with chalons^b fair yspread,
 Not from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
 His daughter had a bed all by herselfe
 Right in the samè chamber by and by :
 It mighte be no bet', and 'causè why,
 There was no roomier herberwe^c in the place.
 They suppen, and they speaken of soláce,
 And drinken ever strong ale at the best.
 Abouten midnight wente they to rest.

Well hath this miller varnished his head,
 Full pale he was, for drunken, and, nought red :
 He yoxeth,^d and he speaketh through the nose,
 As he were on the quake, or on the pose.^e
 To bed he go'th, and with him go'th his wife,
 As any jay she light was and jolif,
 So was her jolly whistle well ywet.
 The cradle at her beddès feet was set,
 To rocken, and to give the child to suck.
 And when that drunken was all in the crock,^f
 To bedde went the daughter right anon,
 To bedde go'th Alein, and also John.
 There n'as no more ; needeth them no dwale,^g
 This miller hath so wisely^h bibbèd ale,
 That as a horse he snorteth in his sleep.

^a Lure.

^b Blankets or coverlets from Chalons in France.

^c Lodging.

^d Hiccuppeth.

^e Mr. Horne translates this line as follows :—

As with the worst of colds, or quinsy's throes,
 And there is no doubt that he has given its spirit.

^f Earthen jug.

^g Sleeping potion.

^h Certainly.

* * * *

His wife bare him a burden a full strong ;
Men might her routing¹ hearen a furlong.
The wenche routeth eke *par compaignie*.

[The youths now study how to be revenged ; but in the end one of them unwittingly makes a confidant of the aroused Miller himself, and makes some remarks upon his daughter not very agreeable to him. So the Miller bursts out,]

“ Ah false traitor, false clerk (quoth he),
Thou shalt be dead, by Goddès dignity,
Who durste be so bold to disparage
My daughter, that is come of such linéage,
And by the throate-bole he caught Alein ;
And he him hent¹ dispiteously again,
And on the nose he smote him with his fist ;
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast ;
And on the floor with nose and mouth to-broke
They wallow, as do two pigges in a poke.
And up they go, and down again anon,
Till that the miller spurnèd at a stone,
And down he fell backward upon his wife,
That wiste nothing of this nicè strife ;
For she was fallen asleep a little wight.

* * * *

And with the fall out of her sleep she braid.^k
“ Help, holy cross of Bromeholmè (she said),
In manus tuas, Lord, to thee I call.
Awake, Simónd, the fiend is on me fall ;
Mine heart is broken ; help ; I am but dead.

* * * *

Help, Simkin, for the false clerkès fight.
This John start up as fast as ever he might,¹
And graspeth by the wallès to and fro
To find a staff, and she start up alsó,

Snoring.

¹ Seized.

^k Started.

And knew the estres¹ bet' than did this John,
 And by the wall she took a staff anon,
 And saw a little shimmering of a light,
 For at a hole in shone the moonè bright,
 And by that light she saw them bothe two,
 But sikerly she n' iste who was who ;
 But as she saw a white thing in her eye,
 And when she 'gan this whitè thing espy,
 She weened^m the clerk had weared a volupere ;
 And with the staff she drew aye near and near,
 And ween'd have hit this Alein at the full,
 And smote the miller on the pillèd skull,
 That down he goeth, and cried, " Harow, I die !"
 These clerkès beat him well, and let him lie,
 And greithen^p them, and take their horse anon,
 And eke their meal, and on their way they gone :
 And at the mill door eke they took their cake
 Of half a bushel flour, full well ybake.

Thus is the proude miller well ybeat,
 And hath ylost the grinding of the wheat,
 And payèd for the supper every del
 Of Alein and of John, that beat him well.

¹ Interior. ^m Fancied. ⁿ Nightcap.
^o Nearer and nearer. ^p Get themselves ready.

THE MERCHANT'S TALE.

WHILOME there was dwelling in Lombardy
 A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
 In which he lived in great prosperity ;
 And sixty years a wifeless man was he.

Were it for holiness or for dotage
 I cannot say, but such a great courage
 Hadde this knight to be a wedded man,
 That day and night he doth all that he can
 To espie, where that he might wedded be ;
 Praying our Lord to granten him, that he
 Might onès knowen of that blissful life,
 That is betwixt an husband and his wife ;
 And for to live under that holy bond
 With which God firste man and woman bound.
 None other life (said he) is worth a bean,
 For wedlock is so easy and so clean
 That in this world it is a paradise.
 Thus saith this olde knight, that was so wise.

A
T

And certainly, as sooth as God is King, it is a
 glorious matter to take a wife ; and especially when
 a man is old and hoar, then is a wife the fruit of
 all his treasure. Then should he take a young
 wife and a fair, to bear him a son and successor,
 and lead his life in joy and solace ; whereas these
bachelors cry out, Alas !

When that they finde any adversity
 In love, which n' is but childish vanity.

And truly it suit well to be so,
 That bachelors have often pain and woe :
 On brittle ground they build, and brittleness
 they find, when they believe themselves secure

They live but as a bird or as a beast,
 In liberty and under no arrest ;
 Thereas a wedded man in his estate
 Liveth a life blissful and ordinate
 Under the yoke of marriage ybound :
 Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound,
 For who can be so buxom as a wife ?
 Who is so true and eke so attentive
 To keep him, sick and whole, as is his make ?^a
 For weal or woe she n' ill him not forsake :
 She n' is not weary him to love and serve,
 Though that he lie bedrid till that he starve.^b

and yet some clerkès say, " It is not so." Of these
 Theophrastus is one. But what matters though

Theophrast list for to lie ?

" Ne take no wife," quoth he, " for husbandry
 As for to spare in household thy dispense ;
 A true servant doth more diligence
 Thy goods to keep, than doth thine owen wife,
 For she will claimen half part all her life.
 And if that thou be sick, so God me save,
 Thy very friendès or a true knave^c
 Will keep thee bet' than she, that waiteth aye
 After thy goods, and hath done many a day."

This sentence, and a hundred thingès worse,
 Writeth this man.

But take no keep^d of all such vanity,
 Defieth Theophrast, and hearkeneth me.

A wife is verily God's gift. All other kind of
 gifts, certainly,

^a Mate. ^b Perish. ^c Servant man. ^d Heed.

As landès, rentès, pasture, or commúne,*
 Or mebles,[†] all be giftès of fortune
 That passen as a shadow on the wall :
 But dread[‡] thou not, if plainly speak I shall,
 A wife will last, and in thine house endure
 Well longer than thee list perádvventure.

Marriage is a full great sacrament ;
 He that which hath no wife I hold him shent ;
 He liveth helpless, and all desolate :
 (I speak of folk in secular estate) :
 And hark'neth why, I say not this for nought,
 That woman is for mannès help ywrought.

When high God made Adam, he said then of his
 goodness, "Let us now make a help unto this
 man, like unto himself," and then he made Eve.
 Here ye may see and prove that a wife is man's
 life and comfort—his terrestrial paradise.

They musten needès live in unity :
 One flesh they be, and one flesh, as I guess,
 Hath but one heart in weal and in distress.

A wife ? ah ! Sainte Mary, *benedicite*,
 How might a man have any adversity
 That hath a wife ? certes I cannot say.
 The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway
 There may no tonguè tell or hearte think.
 If he be poor she helpeth him to swink ;[†]
 She keepeth his goods, and wasteth never a del ;[‡]
 All that her husband doth, her liketh well ;
 She saith not onès nay, when he saith yea ;
 "Do this," saith he ; "all ready, Sir," saith she.

O blessful order, O wedlock precious,
 Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
 And so commended, and approved eke,[†]
 That every man that holds him worth a leek
 Upon his bare knees ought all his life
 Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wife ;

* Common. † Moveables. ‡ Doubt. ^h Ruin.
ⁱ Labour. ^k Never a bit. ^l Also.

Or elles pray to God him for to send
 A wife, to last unto his livè end.
 For then his life is set in sikernesse^m
 He may not be deceived, as I guess,

o that he work after his wivès counsel.

Then may he boldly bearen up his head,
 They be so true, and therewithal so wise.
 * * *

A wife is keeper of thine husbandry :
 Well may the sicke man bewail and weep,
 Thereas there is no wife the house to keep.

warn thee, if thou wilt work wisely,

Love well thy wife as Christ loveth his church ;
 If thou lovest thyself, love thou thy wife.
 No man hateth his flesh, but in his life
 He fostereth it, and therefore bid I thee

herish thy wife, or thou shalt never thrive. Hus-
 and and wife—what though men jest and sport,
 they hold the sure path. They be so knit, there may
 o harm happen ; and especially upon the wives side.

For which this January, of whom I told,
 Considered hath within his dayès old
 The lusty life, the virtuous quiète
 That is in mariage honey-sweet.
 And for his friendès on a day he sent
 To tellen them th' effect of his intent.

With face sad, his tale he hath them told :
 He saide, " Friendès, I am hoar and old,
 And almost (God wot) on my pittès brink,
 Upon my soule somewhat must I think :
 I have my body foolishly dispended,
 Blessed be God that it shall be amended ;
 For I will be certain a wedded man,
 And that anon in all the haste I can.

Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age,
I pray you shapeth for my marriage
All suddenly, for I will not abide :

And I will try to discover on my side

To whom I may be wedded hastily ;
But forasmuch as ye be more than I,
Ye shallen rather such a thing espy
Than I, and where me best were to ally.

But one thing warn I you, my friendes dear,
I will no old wife have in no mannere :
She shall not passen twenty year certain.

I will have no woman thirty years old. And as to
these old widows, they know so much craft,

That with them should I never live in rest ;
For sundry schoolès maken subtle clerkès.
Women of many schoolès half a clerk is,
But certainly, a young thing men may gie^a
Right as men may warm wax with handès ply ;
Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,
I will no old wife have right for this cause.

I would rather hounds should eat me than my inheritance fall into strange hands. I dote not. I know the cause why men should wed, though I also know that many a man speaks of wedlock who knows no more of it than my page. A man should take a wife with great devotion, that he may have children to the honour of God, and that they should help each other in misfortune, and live a chaste life.

And God be thanked my health is good.

Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree
That blossometh ere the fruit ywaxen be ;
The blossomy tree n'is neither dry ne dead :
I feel me no where hoar but on my head.

^a Guide.

Mine heart and all my limbès be as green
 As laurel through the year is for to seen.
 And since that ye have heard all mine intent,
 I pray you to my will ye would assent."

Different men told him different old examples of marriage. Some blamed, some praised it. But at the last, shortly to say, there fell a strife between two brethren, one called Placebo and the other Justinus.

Placebo said ; " O January, brother,
 Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
 Counsel to ask of any that is here,

but that ye be so full of wisdom, that for prudence
 sake it pleaseth you not to depart from the word of
 Solomon.

This word said he unto us every one ;
 ' Work alle thing by counsel,' thus said he,
 ' And then ne shalt thou not repenten thee.'
 But though that Solomon spake such a word,
 Mine owen deare brother and my lord,
 So wisely God my soule bring at rest,
 I hold your owan counsel is the best.

For, brother mine, take of me this motife,
 I have now been a court-man all my life,
 And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
 I have standen in full great degree
 Abouten lordès of full high estate ;
 Yet had I never with none of them debate,
 I never them contraried truely,
 I wot well that my lord can more than I ;
 What that he saith, I hold it firm and stable,

I say the same, or something similar.

A full great fool is any counsellor
 That serveth any lord of high honour
 That dare presume, or ones thinken it,
 That his counsél should pass his lordès wit.

Nay, lordes be no fooles, by my fay.
 Ye have yourselven shewed here to-day
 So high sentence, so holily, and well,
 That I consent, and cónfirm every del °
 Your wordès all, and your opinion :
 By G— there n' is no man in all this town,
 Ne in Itaille, could better have ysaid,
 Christ hold him of his cónsel well repaid.
 And truëly it is a high couráge
 Of any man that stoopen is in age
 To take a young wife, by my father's kin :
 Your heartè hangeth on a jolly pin.

Do now in this mattère right as you lest.^p
 For finally I hold it for the best."

Justinus, that aye stille sat and heard,
 Right in this wise he to Placebo answer'd,
 "Now, brother mine, be patient I pray,
 Since ye have said, and hearkeneth what I say.

Senec', among his other wordès wise,
 Saith, that a man ought him right well advise
 To whom he giveth his land or his cattél.
 And since I ought advisen me right well
 To whom I give my goods away from me,
 Well more I ought advisen me, parde,
 To whom I give my body : for alway
 I warn you well it is no childès play
 To take a wife without advisement.

Men must inquire (that is my opinion) whe
 she be wise and sober, or a drunkard, and pr
 and in other ways a shrew, a scold, or a wastè
 thy goods, or rich or poor; or else a man mus
 mad.

All be it so, that no man finden shall
 None in this world, that trotteth whole in all,
 No man, ne beast.

*But nevertheless it ought to suffice for any
 that she has more good qualities than bad.*

° Every bit.

^p Please.

And all this asketh leisure to inquire.
 For God it wot, I have wept many a tear
 Full privily since that I had a wife.
 Praise whoso will a wedded man's life,
 Certain I find in it but cost and care,
 And observances of all bliesses bare ;

And yet, God knows, my neighbours about, and
 specially a great host of women,

Say that I have the moste steadfast wife,
 And eke the meekest one that beareth life.

But I know best where my shoe pincheth me. Ye
 say, for me, do as best pleaseth you. Consider—
 be a man of age—how ye enter into wedlock,
 and especially with a young and fair wife. I pray
 you that ye be not repaid with evil.”

“Well, quoth January, and hast thou said? A
 straw for Seneca, and a straw for thy sayings. I
 reckon not your school terms worth a panier full
 of herbs. Wiser men than thou have, as ye have
 heard, assented before to my purpose. Placebo,
 what say ye?”

“I say it is a wicked man,” quoth he, “that
 undereth matrimony.” And with that word they
 all rose suddenly, and are agreed that he should
 wed when and where he pleases.

High fantasie and curious business
 From day to day 'gan in the soul impress
 Of January about his marriage.
 Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage
 There passeth through his heart night by night,
 As whoso took a mirror polished bright
 And set it in a common market-place
 Then should he see many a figure pace
 By his mirror, and in the same wise
 'Gan January in with his thought devise

Of maidens, which that dwellen him beside,
 He wiste not where that he might abide,
 For if that one have beauty in her face,
 Another stands so in the people's grace
 For her sadness^o and her benignity,
 That of the people the greatest voice hath she.
 And some were rich, and hadden a bad name.
 But natheless, betwixt earnest and game,
 He at the last appointed him on one,
 And let all other from his hearte gone
 And chose her of his own authority,
 For love is blind all day, and may not see.
 And when that he was in his bed ybrought,
 He portrayed in his heart and in his thought,
 Her freshe beauty, and her age tender,
 Her middle small, her armes long and slender,
 Her wise governance, her gentleness,

Her womanly and earnest bearing.

And when that he on her was condescended,
 Him thought his choice it might not be amended;
 For when that he himself concluded had,
 Him thought each other mannès wit so bad,

that it were impossible to say a word against his choice; this was his fantasy. He sent to his friends, praying them to do him that pleasure; that they would come hastily to him. He would abridge all their labours. They needed no more to go nor to ride, he had made up his mind where to rest. Placebo came first with his friends. January asked them all a boon, that they would none of them make arguments against his purpose.

Which purpose was pleasant to God (said he),
 And very ground of his prosperity.

He said, there was a maiden in the town,
 Which that of beauty hadde great renown.

All were it so, she were of small degree,
 Sufficeth him her youth and her beauty:
 Which maid (he said) he would have to his wife,
 To lead in ease and holiness his life:
 And thanked God, that he might have her all,
 That no wight with his blisse parten shall;
 And prayed them to labour in this need,
 And shapen that he faile not to speed.
 For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.
 There is (quoth he) nothing may me displease
 Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
 The which I will rehearse in your preséce.

“ I have (quoth he) heard said full yore ago,
 There may no man have perfect blisses two,
 This is to say, in earth and eke in heaven.
 For though he keep him from the sinnès seven,
 And eke from every branch of thilke tree,
 Yet is there so perfect felicity
 And so great ease and lust^r in marriage,
 That ever I am aghast now in mine age
 That I shall leaden now so merry a life,
 So delicate, withouten woe or strife,
 That I shall have mine heaven in earthe here;
 For since that very heaven is bought so dear
 With tribulation and great penáncé,
 How should I then, living in such pleasáncé,
 As alle wedded men do with their wives,

come to the bliss eternal where Christ is? This
 is my dread, and ye, my two brethren, I beg ye to
 answer this question.”

Justinus, who hated his folly, answered at once
 in his bantering, and in order to abridge a long
 tale, would allege no authority.

But saide, “ Sir, so there be no obstácle
 Other than this, God of his high miracle,

^r Pleasure.

CANTERBURY TALES.

And of his mercy may so for you werthe . . .
That ere ye have your rights of holy church
Ye may repent of wedded mannes life,
In which ye say there is no woe ne strife :
And elles God forbid, but if he sent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Well often, rather than a single man.
And therefore, Sir, the best rede^e that I can,
Despair you not, but haveth in memory,
Peradventure she may be your purgatory ;
She may be Goddes mean and Goddes whip,
Then shall your soul up unto heaven skip
Swifter than doth an arrow of a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shall know
That there n' is none so great felicity
In marriage, ne never more shall be,

to hinder you from your salvation. My tale is
done, for my wit is but thin.

Be not aghast hereof, my brother dear,
But let us waden out of this mattére."

And now Justinus and his brother take the
leave. And when men saw that the marriage mu
needs be, they wrought so by sleight and by wi
treaty, that this maiden, who was called May,

As hastily as ever that she might,
Shall wedded be unto this January.
I trow it were too longe you to tarry
If I you told of every script and bond
By which that she was feoffed in his lond ;
Or for to reckon of her rich array.

But finally the day is come, that they have
gone to the churche, to

receive the holy Sacrament.
Forth cometh the priest, with stole about his
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebek'

• Work.

• Advice.

In wisdom and in truth of marriage,
 And said his orisons, as is usage,
 And crossed them, and bade God should them bless,
 And made all siker^u enow with holiness.

Thus be they wedded with solemnity;
 And at the feaste sitteth he and she
 With other worthy folk upon the dais.
 All full of joy and bliss is the paláce,
 And full of instruments, and of victuaille
 The moste dainteous of all Itaille.
 Before them stood such instruments of soun
 That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,
 Ne maden never such a melody.
 At every course in came loud minstrelsy,
 That never Joab trumped for to hear—
 Ne he Theodomas—yet half so clear
 At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.
 Bacchus the wine them skinketh^x all about,
 And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
 (For January was become her knight
 And woulde both assayen his couráge^y
 In liberty, and eke in marriage)
 And with her firebrand in her hand about
 Danceth before the bride and all the rout.
 And certainly I dare right well say this,
 Hymeneus, that god of wedding is,
 Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.

Iold thou thy peace, thou Marcian poet, that
 ritest us of the wedding of Philologie and Mer-
 ury, and of the songs that the Muses sung: too
 nall is thy pen and thy tongue to describe this
 marriage.

When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,
 There is such mirth that it may not be written
 Assayeth it yourself, then may ye witen^y,

Certain.

^x Poureth.

^y Know.

If that I lie or no in this matiere.
 Mais^a that sit with so benign a cheer,
 Her to behold it seemed Faery;
 Queen Hester looked never with such an eye
 On Assuere,^b so meek a look hath she;
 I may you not devise all her beauty;
 But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
 That she was like the brighte morrow of May,
 Fulfilled of all beauty, and pleasance.

This January is ravished in a trance
 At every time he looketh in her face.

The hour came that it was but reasonable they
 should rise from the feast.

And after that men dance, and drinken fast,
 And spices all about the house they cast,
 And full of joy and bliss is every man,
 All but a squire that highte Damian,
 Which carved before the knight full many a day:
 He was so ravished on his lady May,

that for the very pain he was nearly mad; he almost swooned as he stood there:

So sore hath Venus hurt him with her brand,
 As that she bare it dancing in her hand.
 And to his bed he went him hastily;
 No more of him as at this time speak I;
 But there I let him weep enow and 'plain,
 Till freshe May will ruen on his pain.

O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!
 O familiar foe, that his service bedeth!^b
 O servant traitor, false, of holy hue,
 Like to the adder in bosom sly untrue,
 God shield us alle from your acquaintance!
 O January, drunken in pleasance,
 Of marriage, see how thy Damian
 Thine owen squiere and thy boren man,

^a May.

^b Ahasuerus.

^c Offereth.

Intendeth fer to do thee villany :
 God grante thee thine homely foe to espy.
 For in this world n' is worse pestilence
 Than homely foe, all day in thy preséance.
 Performed hath the Sun his arc diurn,^c
 No longer may the body of him sojourn
 On the horizon, as in that latitude :
 Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,
 'Gan overspread the hemisphere about :
 For which departed is this lusty route
 From January, with thank on every side,
 Home to their houses lustily they ride.
 There as they do their thinges as them lest,
 And, when they saw their timè, go to rest.

How will I speak of the woeful Damian, that languisheth for love.

I say, O silly Damian, alas !
 Answer to this demand, as in this case,
 How shalt thou to thy lady freshe May
 Tellen thy woe ? She will alway say nay ;
 Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe betray ;
 God be thy help, I can no better say.

This Damian might no longer endure in this wise.
 But privately he borrowed a pence, and wrote all
 is grief in a letter,

In manner of a complaint or a lay,
 Unto his faire freshe lady May.
 And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
 He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.

The moone that at noon was thilke day
 That January hath wedded freshe May
 In ten of Taurus, was into Cancer gliden ;
 So long hath Maius in her chamber abiden,
 As custom is unto these nobles all :
 A brîde shall not eaten in the hall

Till dayes four, or three days at the least,
 Ypassed be, then let her go to feast.
 The fourthe day complete from noon to noon
 When that the highe masse was ydone,
 In halle sat this January and May,
 As fresh as is the brighte summer's day.
 And so befell, how that this goode man
 Remembered him upon this Damian
 And saide ; " Saint Marie ! how may it be,
 That Damian attendeth not to me ?
 Is he aye sick ? or how may this betide ? "

His squires, who stood there by his side, excused him, because of his sickness, which hindered him from attending to his business : no other cause might make him tarry. " That is what I thought," quoth his lord,

" He is a gentle squiér by my truth ;
 If that he died, it were great harm and ruth ;
 He is as wise, discreet, and as secree,^d
 As any man I wot of his degree,
 And thereto manly and eke serviceable,
 And for to be a thrifty man right able.
 But after meat as soon as ever I may,
 I will myselfe visit him and eke ° May,
 To do him all the comfort that I can."
 And for that word him blessed every man,
 That of his bounty and his gentleness
 He woulde so comfórten in sicknéss
 His squiére, for it was a gentle deed.

" Dame," quoth this January, " take good heed, that after meat ye go with all your women, when ye leave this hall, to see this Damian. Gladden him ; he is a gentle man ; and tell him that I will visit him when I have rested me a little. And *speed* you fast, for I will wait till that ye are fast *asleep* by my side."

^d Secret.

° Also.

This freshe May hath straight her way yhold
 With all her women unto Damian.
 Down by his beddès side sit she then,
 Comforting him as goodly as she may.
 This Damian, when that his time he say^f
 In secret wise, his purse, and eke his bill,
 In which that he ywritten had his will,
 Hath put into her hand withouten more
 Save that he sighèd wondrous deep and sore,
 And softely to her right thus said he :

Mercy, do not discover me : for I am but dead
 'that this thing be known."

This purse hath she within her bosom hid,
 And went her way ; ye get no more of me ;
 But unto January ycome is she.

May receives but too favourably the letter, and
 answers it.]

Up riseth Damian the nexte morrow ;
 All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.
 He combeth him, he pruneth him and picketh,^g
 He doth all that his lady list and liketh ;
 And eke to January he go'th as low
 As ever did a dogge for the bow.^h
 He is so pleasant unto every man
 (For craft is all, whoso that do it can),
 That every wight is fain to speak him good ;
 And fully in his lady's grace he stood.

'hus leave I Damian and proceed with my tale.

^f Saw.

^g The image referred to is that of a bird busily engaged
 plucking away, i.e. *pruning* and *picking* out the damaged or
 redundant feathers. Thus Gower writes,—

"For there he pruneth him and picketh,
 As doth an hawke when him well liketh."

^h Or, as we should now say, for the gun. What a pic-
 ture of the crouching, watchful *lurcher*-lover, ready, beneath
 all his apparent humility and harmlessness, to spring upon
 his prey!

Some clerkes holden that felicity
 Stands in delight, and therefore certain he,
 'This noble January, with all his might,
 In honest wise as 'longeth to a knight,
 Shaped him to liven full deliciously.
 His housing, his array, as honestly
 To his degree was makèd as a king's.
 Amonges other of his honest things,
 He had a garden wallèd all with stone,
 So fair a garden wot¹ I no where none.
 For out of doubt I verily suppose
 That he that wrote the Romaunt of the Rose
 Ne could of it the beauty well devise :
 Ne Priapus ne mighte not suffice
 Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
 The beauty of the garden, and the well
 That stood under a laurel always green.
 Full often time he Pluto and his queen
 Proserpina, and all her faërie,
 Disporten them, and maken melody
 About that well, and dancèd, as men told.

This noble knight, the aged January, hath such
 pleasure in walking in his garden, that he will
 suffer no one to bear the key but himself; he ever
 carried the silver key of the small wicket, with
 which when he pleased he opened it.

And in this wise many a merry day
 Lived this January and freshe May ;
 But worldly joy may not alway endure
 To January, ne to no creature.

O sudden hap, O thou fortune unstable,
 Like to the Scorpion so deceivable,
 That flatterest with thy head when thou wilt sting ;
 Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming ;
 O brittle joy, O sweete poison quaint,
 O monster, that so subtilly canst paint

Thy giftès, under hue of steadfastness,
 That thou deceivest bothe more and less ;^k
 Why hast thou January thus deceived,
 That haddest him for thy full friend received ?

and now thou hast bereft him of both his eyes ;
 or sorrow of which he desireth to die.

Alas ! this noble January, free
 Amid his lust^l and his prosperity
 Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.
 He weepeth and he waileth piteously ;
 And therewithal the fire of jealousy
 (Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)
 So burnt his hearte, that he woulde fain
 That some man had both him and her yslain ;
 For neither after his death, ne in his life,
 Ne would he that she were no love, ne wife,
 But ever live as a widow in clothes blake,
 Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.
 But at the last, after a month or tway,
 His sorrow 'gan assuagen, sooth to say ;
 For when he wist it might no other be,
 He patiently took his adversity :

cept that, beyond doubt, he may not forget that
 e is jealous evermore.

Which jealousy it was so outragèous,
 That neither in hall, ne in none other house,
 Ne in none other place never the mo'
 He n' oulde suffer her for to ride or go,
 But if that he had hand on her alway :
 For which full often weepeth freshe May.

Unable otherwise to obtain a moment's conver-
 sation with each other, Damian succeeds in mak-
 ing a false key to the wicket, and enters the garden
 the morning just before January and May, and sits
 ill under a bush.]

^k Rich and poor.

^l Joy.

Anon

This January, as blind as is a stone,
 With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',
 Into this freshe garden is ago',
 And clapped to the wicket suddenly.

"Now wife," quoth he, "here n'is but thou
 That art the creature that I best love :
 For by that Lord that sits in heaven above,
 I hadde lever dien on a knife
 Than thee offenden, deare truë wife.
 For God's sake, thinke how I chose thee

not for covetousness,

But only for the love I had to thee.
 And though that I be old and may not see,
 Be to me true ; and I will tell you why ;
 Certes three thingès shall ye win thereby ;
 First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour
 And all mine heritagè, town and tower.
 I give it you, maketh charters as you lest,^m
 This shall be done to morrow ere sun-rest,
 So wiselyⁿ God my soule bring to bliss ;
 I pray you on this covenant ye me kiss.
 And though that I be jealous, wite^o me noug
 Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,
 That when that I consider your beauty',
 And therewithal the unlikely elde^p of me,
 I may not certes, though I shoulde die,
 Forbear to be out of your company
 For very love ; this is withouten doubt.
 Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about."

This freshe May, when she these wordès l
 Benignèly to January ansvér'd ;
 But first and forward she began to weep ;
 " I have, quoth she, a soule for to keep
 As well as ye, and also mine honóur ;
 And of my wifehood thilke tender flower

^m Please.ⁿ Truly.^o Blame.^p Age

Which that I have assurèd in your hond
 When that the priest to you my body bound,
 Wherefore I will answer in this mannere
 With leave of you, mine owen lord so dear.

I pray to God that never dawn that day
 That I ne starve,^m as foul as woman may,
 If ever I do unto my kin that shame,
 Or elles I impaire so my name,
 That I be false; and if I do that lack,ⁿ
 Do strippen me and put me in a sack,
 And in the nexte river do me drench :^o
 I am a gentlewoman and no wench.

Why speak ye thus, but that men be ever untrue,
 and women ever reproved by you. Ye have no
 other delight, I believe, but to speak to us of
 blame and untrustworthiness."

Bright was the day, and blue the firmament;
 Phœbus of gold his streamers down hath sent
 To gladden every flower with his warmness;
 He was that time in Gemini, I guess,
 But little from his declination
 Of Cancer, Jove's exaltation.
 And so befell in that bright morrow tide,
 That in the garden, on the farther side,
 Pluto, that is the king of Faërie,
 And many a lady in his company
 Following his wife, the queen Prosérpina,
 Which that he ravished out of Ethná,
 While that she gathered flowres in the mead,
 (In Claudian ye may the story read
 How that her in his grisly cart he fet')^p
 This king of Faërie adown him set
 Upon a bench of turfes fresh and green,
 And right anon thus said he to his queen :

^m Perish.

ⁿ A fault, vice, or disgraceful thing.

^o That is to say, drown me.

^p Fetched.

"My wife," quoth he, "there may no wight say nay,
The experience so proveth it every day,
The treason which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notable of your untruth and brittleness.

O Solomon, richeat of all richesse,
Fulfilled of sapience and worldly glory,
Full worthy be thy wordès to memáry
To every wight, that wit and reason can.
Thus praiseth he the bounty yet of man;
Among a thousand men yet found I one,
But of all women found I never none.
Thus saith this king, that knew your wickedness;
And Jesus, *Filius*^a Sirach, as I guess,
He speaketh of you but seldom reverence,
A wilde fire, a córrupt pestilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,

his own man seeks to dishonour him. Now will
I grant unto the old, blind, worthy knight his
sight, that he may see his wife's baseness."

"Yea, Sir," quoth Proserpine, "and will ye so?"
Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear,
That I shall give her suffisant answére,
And alle women after for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt ytake,
With face bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that woulde them accuse:
For lack of answer, none of us shall dien,
All had ye seen a thing with both your eyen,
Yet shall we so viságe it hardily,
And weep, and swear, and chiden subtly,
That ye should be as lewèd^r as be geese.

What recketh me of your authorities?

^a Son of.

^r Stupid, or ignorant.

I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
 Found of us women foolès many [a] one :
 But though that he ne found no good womán,
 There bath yfounden many another man
 Women full good, and true, and virtuous ;
 Witness on them that dwelt in Christès house ;
 With martyrdom they proved their constancy.
 The Roman gestes maken rémembrance
 Of many a very true wife also.
 But, Sir, ne be not wroth, albeit so
 Though that he said he found no good womán,
 I pray you take the sentence of the man :
 He meant thus, that in sovereign bounty
 N' is none but God, no, neither he ne she.
 Aye, for the very God that n' is but one ;
 What maken ye so much of Solomon ?
 What though he made a temple, Goddes house ?
 What though he riche were and glorious ?
 So made he eke a temple of false gods :

How might he do a thing that is more strongly
 forbidden than that ?

He was a libertine and an idolator. And in his
 age forsook his very God. And if God had not
 spared him for his father's sake, he should have
 lost his kindom.

I sette not of all the villany
 That he of women wrote, a butterfly.
 I am a woman, needès must I speak,
 Or swell unto that time mine hearte break.
 For since he said that we be jangleresses,
 As ever might I brouken whole* my tresses,
 I shall not sparen for no courtesy,
 To speak him harm, that saith us villany."
 " Dame," quoth this Pluto, " be no longer wroth ;
 I give it up : but since I swore mine oath

* *Brouken* enjoy, *whole*, wholly, or in all their luxuriant
beauty, my tresses.

That I would granten him his sight again,
 My word shall stand, that warn I you certain :
 I am a king, it suit me not to lie."
 " And I," quoth she, " am queen of Faërie.
 Her answer she shall have, I undertake,
 Let us no more wordès of it make."
 " Forsooth," quoth he, " I will you not contráry."

[Accordingly the moment May has succeeded in getting away from the knight's side, his blindness is removed, and he sees the two lovers in company. But Proserpina is as good as her word. May's woman's wit and address saves her : she explains away the meeting, and almost persuades the knight to distrust his own eyes, observing in conclusion] Yea, Sir, ye may believe as you please ;

But, Sir, a man that waketh of his sleep,
 He may not suddenly well taken keep^t
 Upon a thing, ne see it perfectly,
 Tell that he be adawed^u verily.
 Right so a man that long hath blind ybe,
 He may not suddenly so well ysec,
 First when his sight is newe come again
 As he that hath a day or two yseen.
 Till that your sight ysettled be a while,
 There may full many a sighte you beguile.
 Beware, I pray you, for by Heaven's king,
 Full many a man weeneth^w to see a thing,
 And it is all another than it seemeth ;
 He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth."

^t Take proper notice at first. ^u Awaked. ^w Believeth.

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.

A MERCHANT once dwelled at Saint Denis, who
was rich, for which men held him also wise. He
had a wife of excellent beauty: she was fond of
company and of revel, that cause more expense

Than worth is all the cheer and reverence
That men them do at feastès and at dances.
Such salutations and countenances
Passen, as doth a shadow upon the wall:
But woe is him that payen must for all.
The silly husband algate^a he must pay,
He must us clothe and he must us array,
All for his owen worship richely:
In which array we dancen jollily.

And if he cannot, perchance, or else likes not, to
endure such expense,

But thinketh it is wasted and ylost,
Then must another payen for our cost,
Or lend us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble merchant held a worthy house,
For which he had all day so great repair
For his largéss, and for his wife was fair,
That wonder is; but hearkeneth to my tale.

Among all these guests, great and little, there
was a monk, a fair man and a bold, I trow he was
some thirty winters of age, who was ever drawing

^a Always.

continually towards this house. This young monk, that was so fair of face, had been so well acquainted with this good merchant since that their knowledge of each other first began,

That in his house as familiar was he
As it possible is any friend to be.
And for as muchel as this goode man,
And eke this monk, of which that I began,
Were bothe two yborn in one villáge,
The monk him claimeth as for cousinage ;
And he against him said not onés nay,
But was as glad thereof, as fowl ^b of day ;
For to his heart it was a great pleasánce.

Thus be they knit with etern' álliance,
And each of them 'gan other for to ensure,
Of brotherhood, while that their life may dure.

Free and liberal, especially in his household expenditure, was this Dan John, and diligent in pleasing and in incurring great costs. He would not forget to give to the least of the pages in all that house ; but in accordance with their degree he gave to the lord, and afterwards to his men, some kind of honest thing ; for which they were as glad of his coming as the bird is glad at the uprising of the sun.

But so befell, this merchant on a day,
Shaped him to maken ready his array
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,
To buyen there a portión of ware :
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messenger and prayed hath Dan John
That he should come to Saint Denis, and play
With him, and with his wife, a day or tway,
Ere he to Bruges went, in alle wise.

This noble monk, of which I you devise,

Hath of his abbot, as him list, licence,
 (Because he was a man of high prudence,
 And eke an officer) out for to ride,
 To see their granges, and their barnes wide,
 And with Saint Denis, he cometh anon.
 Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
 Our deare cousin, full of courtesy?
 With him he brought a jug of Malvoisie:
 And eke another full of fine Vernage,^d
 And Volatile,^e as aye was his usage:
 And thus I let them eat, and drink, and play,
 This merchant and this monk, a day or tway.

The thirde day this merchant up ariseth,
 And on his needes sadly^f him adviseth:
 And up into his counting house goeth he,
 To reckon with himselfen, well may be,
 Of thilke year, how that it with him stood,
 And how that he dispended had his good,
 And if that he increased were or non. |
 His bookes and his bagges many a one
 He layeth before him on his counting board;
 Full riche was his treasure and his hoard;
 For which full fast his counter door he shet;^g
 And eke he n' oulde no man should him let.^h
 Of his accountes, for the meane time:
 And thus he sate, till it was passed prime.

Dan John was risen in the morrow also,
 And in the garden walketh to and fro,
 And hath his thinges said full courteously.
 This goode wife came walking privily
 Into the garden, there he walketh soft,
 And him saluteth, as she hath done oft.

A maiden child was with her, whom she may
 govern and guide as she pleases, for the maid was
 get under the staff of discipline.

^c Malmsey wine.

^d A species of wine so called.

^e Wild fowl, or game.

^f Seriously.

^g Shut.

^h Disturb or hinder him.

"O dear cousin mine, Dan John," said
"what aileth you to rise so early?"

"Niece," quoth he, "five hours' sleep i
night ought to suffice, except for an old n
But, dear niece, why be ye so pale?"

"Alas!" said she, "to no wight dare I tell
it stands with me. Wherefore I think to go ou
this country, or else to make an end of myself,

So full am I of dread and eke of care."
This monk began upon this wife to stare,
And said, "Alas! my niece, God forbid,
That ye for any sorrow, or any dread,
Fordo¹ yourself, but telleth me your grief,
Peráventure I may in your mischief^k
Counsel or help: and therefore telleth me
All your annoy.

It shall be secret, for on my Portos^l here I m
an oath that never in my life, willingly or
willingly, shall I betray your confidence."

"The same again to you," quoth she, "I say."

"By G— and by this Portos^l I you swear,
Though men me woulden all in pieces tear,
Ne shall I never, for to go to hell,
Betray one word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no cousinage, ne álliance,
But verily for love and áffiance."

"Cousin," quoth she, "if that I had a space
As I have none, and namely^m in this place,
Then would I tell a legend of my life,
What I have suffered since I was a wife,
With mine husband, all be he your cousin."

"Nay," quoth this monk, "by G— and &
Martín,

: Undo; make away with. ^k Misfortune.

^l Breviary. ^m Especially.

He n' is no morè cousin unto me,
 Than is the leaf that hangeth on the tree :
 I clepe ^a him so by Saint Denis of France,
 To have the morè cause of acquaintance
 f you ; then tell me

 . . . your grief, lest that he come adown,
 And hasteth you, and go'th away anon."

Oh, my Dan John," said she,

 " Full lefe ^o were me this counsel for to hide,
 But out it must, I may no longer abide.

 Mine husband is to mè the worste man
 That ever was since that the world began.

What most grieves me is his niggardliness. Ye
 now well that five things woman naturally desire.
 They would that their husbands should be hardy,
 wise, rich, liberal, and kind.

But by that ilke Lord that for us bled,
 For his honour myselven for to array,
 A Sunday next I muste needès pay
 A hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.^p
 Yet were me lever that I were unborn
 Than me were done a slander or villany ;
 And if mine husband eke might it espy,
 I n'ere but lost, and therefore I you pray
 Lend me this sum, or elles must I dey.
 Dan John, I say, lend me this hundred franks ;
 Parde I will not faille you my thanks,
 If that you list to do that I you pray,
 For at a certain day I will you pay."

This gentle monk answered,

 " Now truely mine owen lady dear,
 I have (quoth he) on you so great a ruth
 That I you swear, and plichte you my truth,

^a Call. ^o Glad. ^p Lost.

That when your husband is to Flanders fare,
I will deliver you out of this care,
For I will bringen you a hundred franks.

"Go now," said he, "and let us dine." The

Bade the cookes that they should them hie,
So that men mighten dine, and that anon.

Up to her husband is this wife ygone,
And knocketh at his counter boldly.

"*Qui est là ?*"^a quoth he. "Peter, it am I,"

Quoth she. "What, Sir, how longe will ye fa

How longe time will ye reckon and cast

Your *summes*, and your bookes, and your thing

The devil have part of all such reckonings.

Ye have enough, parde, of God's gifts ; come d
to-day and let your bags alone. Are ye
ashamed that Dan Joha should fast this
cheerless day ?

What ? let us hear a mass, and go we dine ?"

"Wife," quoth this man, "little canst thou di
The curious business that we have :

For of us chapmen, all so God me save,
And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
Scarcely amonges twenty, ten shall thrive
Continually, lasting unto our age.

We must well maken cheer and good visage,

And driven forth the world as it may be,

And keepen our estate in privity,

Till we be dead, or elles that we play

A pilgrimage, or go out of the way.

And therefore have I great necessity,

Upon this quainte^r world to advisen me.

For evermore must we stand in dread

Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhead.

To Flanders will I go to-morrow at day,

And come again as soon as ever I may.

^a Who is there?

^r Strange.

For which, my deare wife, I thee beseeke;^{*}
 As be to every wight buxom and meek.
 And for to keep our goods be curious,^u
 And honestly governe well our house.
 Thou hast enough, in every manner wise,
 That to a thrifty household may suffice.
 Thee lacketh none array, ne no victaille;
 Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not fail.
 And with that word his counter door he shet,
 And down he go'th; no longer would he let;^x
 And hastily a masse was there said,
 And speedily the tables were ylaid,
 And to the dinner faste they them sped,
 And richely this monk the chapman fed.

And after dinner Dan John soberly
 This chapman took apart, and privily
 He said him thus: "Cousin, it standeth so,
 That, well I see, to Bruges ye will go;
 God and Saint Austin speede you and guide,
 I pray you, cousin, wisely that ye ride.

Governe you also of your diet temperately, and
 specially during this heat.

Betwixt us two needeth no strangè fare;
 Farewell, cousin, God shielde you from care.
 If anything there be by day or night,
 If it lie in my power and my might,
 That ye me will command in any wise,
 It shall be done, right as ye will devise.

But one thing ere ye go, if it may be,
 I woulde prayen you for to lend me
 A hundred frankes for a week or tway,
 For certain beastès that I muste buy,
 To storen with a placè that is ours:
 (God help me so, I woulde that it were yours)
 I shall not faille surely of my day,
 Not for a thousand frankes.

^{*} Beseech.

^u Careful—watchful.

^x Delay.

But I pray you let this thing be secret, for I would buy these beasts to-night.

And fare now well, mine owen cousin dear,
Grand mercy of your cost and of your cheer."

This noble merchant gently anon
 Answered and said, "O cousin mine, Dan John,
 Now sikerly ^r this is a small request :
 My gold is yourès when that it you lest,^a
 And not only my gold but my chaffare ;^a
 Take what you list, God shielde that ye spare.

But one thing ye know well enough of chapmen,
 that money is their plough. We must borrow
 while we have a name. It is no sport to be with-
 out either goods or money. So pay it again when
 convenient to you. I would gladly please you to
 the best of my might."

These hundred frankès fetched he forth anon,
 And privily he took them to Dan John :
 No wight in all this world wist of this loan
 Saving this merchant, and Dan John alone.
 They drink, and speak, and roam awhile, and play,
 Till that Dan John rideth to his abbey.
 The morrow came, and forth this merchant rideth
 To Flanders ward, his 'prentice well him guideth
 Till he came in to Bruges merrily.
 Now go' th this merchant fast and busily
 About his need, and buyeth and creanceth ;^b
 He neither playeth at the dice, ne danceth ;
 But as a merchant, shortly for to tell,
 He leadeth his life, and there I let him dwell.

[Taking advantage of the loan of money to the
 merchant's wife, Dan John induces her to forget
 her duty to her absent husband.]

^r *Certainly.*

^a *Please.*

^a *Merchandize.*

^b *Borroweth on credit.*

This merchant, when that ended was the fair,
 To Saint Denis he 'gan for to repair,
 And with his wife he maketh feast and cheer,
 And telleth her that chaffere is so dear

that he must needs make an agreement for a loan.

For he was bound in a recognizance,
 To payen twenty thousand shields • anon.
 For which this merchant is to Paris gone
 To borrow of certain friendès that he had .
 A certain frankès, and some with him he lead.^f
 And when that he was come into the town,

for great tenderness and great love towards Dan John, he goeth first to him himself, not to ask or borrow money of him, but in order to know and see as to his welfare, and to tell him of his dealings, as friends do when they be met in company.

Dan John him maketh feast and merry cheer,
 And he him told again full specially,
 How he had well ybought and graciously
 (Thanked be God) all whole his merchandise
 Save that he must in alle manner wise
 Maken a chevisance,^g as for his best:
 And then he shoulde be in joy and rest. •
 Dan John answered, " Certes I am fain,^h
 That ye in health be comen home again:
 And if that I were rich, as have I bliss,
 Of twenty thousand shields should ye not miss,
 For ye so kindly this other day
 Lente me golde, and as I can and may,
 I thanke you, by God and by Saint Jame.
 But natheless I took unto our Dame,
 Your wife at home, the samè gold again
 Upon your bench,

she knows it well.

• French crowns. ^f Took.

^g Agreement for borrowing money. ^h Glad.

Now by your leave, I may no longer dwell ;
 Our abbot will out of this town anon,
 And in his company I muste gone.
 Greet well our dame, mine owen niecè sweet,
 And farewell deare cousin till we meet."

This merchant, who was full wary and wise, hath
 borrowed, and paid also in Paris, to certain
 Lombards, the gold he borrowed, and got back his
 bond,

And home he go'th, merry as a popinjay.
 For well he knew he stode in such array,
 That needes must he win in that voyage
 A thousand franks above all his costage.^f

His wife full ready met him at the gate,
 As she was wont of old uságe algate :^s
 And all that night in mirth they be set,
 For he was rich, and clearly out of debt.

The merchant then said,

" By G—," quoth he, " I am a little wroth
 With you, my wife, although it be me loth :^h
 And wot ye why ? by G—, as that I guess,
 That ye have made a manner strangèness
 Betwixen me and my cousin Dan John.
 Ye should have warnèd me, ere I had gone,
 That he you had a hundred frankès paid
 By ready token :

I hold him ungratefully treated, in speaking to
 him of borrowed money.

(He seemed so as by his countenance)
 But natheless, by G—, our heaven's king,
 I thoughte not to ask of him no thing.
 I pray thee, wife, ne do thou no more so.
 Tell me alway, ere that I from thee go,
 If any debtor hath in mine absènce

^f Costs.

^s Always.

^h Unpleasant.

Ypaid thee, lest through thy negligence
I might him ask a thing that he hath paid.

This wife was not afeardè ne afraid,
But boldèly she said, and that anon ;

“ Marry, I defy that falsè monk Dan John ;

know he gave me certain gold. What? evil
all on this monk's snout! God knows, I believed
e had given it me because of you, to aid mine
honour and my profit.

For cousinage, and eke for *belle chere*,
That he hath had full often times here.

But since I see I stand in such disjoint
I will answer you shortly to the point :

my truth I have spent it on my apparel, every
t, and not on waste.

And for I have bestowèd it so well
For your honour, for Goddès sake I say
As be not wrath, but let us laugh and play.

orgive it me, mine own dear husband.

This merchant saw there was no remedy :
And for to chide, it n' ere but a folly'
Sith that the thing may not amended be.

“ Now wife,” he said, “ and I forgive it thee ;
But by thy life ne be no more so large ;
Keep bet' my good, this give I thee in charge.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

THAT CHAUCER had a high, we might say holy, sense of the purity and inviolability of the marriage bond, and of the duties and self-sacrifices it may demand, has been shown too touchingly and eloquently in various parts of his works, but especially in the 'Franklin's Tale,' for us to undertake the presumptuous task of urging such a conclusion. In that tale, then, and in his various other serious tales, is to be found the poet's best answer to and excuse for the licentious modes of treatment he has allowed himself in his humorous productions, and which have imposed upon us the somewhat delicate and difficult task of making the foregoing selections. In the one, he did but at the worst stoop to the tastes of the time in order to attract—and influence—and, lastly, raise those tastes to the height necessary for the due comprehension and appreciation of his moral teachings in the other. Compare him in these respects with the comic dramatists of the Congreve school, and we see at once how accidental and extraneous with Chaucer, looking at his labours as a whole, are the impurities and immoralities that make up nearly the "being, end and aim" of the brilliant but vicious writers who occupied our stage in the last century. In Chaucer's hearty laugh there is something so genial, it is for the most part so calculated to yield

good feelings, that in giving way to our merriment in his company we can hardly avoid experiencing a sense of relief from the "perilous stuff" that too often "weighs upon the heart." The dramatists in question are neither genial nor kindly; and are much more likely to leave perilous stuff of their own behind them than to take any away. In a word, goodness with them, whenever they appear to exhibit any, is but a passport for evil; evil with Chaucer, if he ever defiles his hand with it, is sure to be presently washed away by the stream of beautiful and noble thoughts and deeds that he pours forth.

With a brief summary of the poet's labours we now conclude these volumes. Let us glance at what he did for his own time, and what for ours and for remotest posterity.

The men of the fourteenth century (a few book-worms only excepted) had lost nearly all remembrance or consciousness of the accumulated treasures of philosophy and learning of the ancients: Chaucer brought those treasures back to them, so amalgamated with precious gifts of his own, and so incorporated into the national tongue, that they could never experience a like fate.

What Shakspeare said the stage should be—and made it—Chaucer had previously made his works;—a mirror reflecting the very image and body of the time—and with the same object as Shakspeare, that vice and scorn might see their true image. In consequence, what Froissart was merely to chivalry, an unreal but brilliant institution of the hour, Chaucer was to the entire life of England, with all its variety of character and class, all its conflicting interests, and passions, and views. Be-

tween the Poore Parson and the Clerk of Oxenford, and the Pardoner and Sumpnour, what a gulf intervenes; yet is it step by step filled up and peopled. We have often wondered that romance writers have paid so little attention to the fourteenth century, seeing that Chaucer has left them such complete and abundant materials. If they want to learn something of the higher philosophy of the period, let them for instance look at the long passage in the 'Knight's Tale' commencing

The Firste Mover of the cause above;

or at the Wife of Bath's description of true gentility. Look—who

intendeth aye,
To do the gentle deedès that he can,
And take *him* for the greatest gentleman.

If they want to know to what absurdities philosophy could at the same time descend, let them look at the accounts of the magical processes that make it appear

the rockès be away,

in the 'Franklin's Tale;' or of the processes of that "sliding science," Alchemy, that has made not only the Yeoman but the master also "bare." If they want to glance at the commercial peculiarities of Europe at the time, they will get many a useful hint from the movements and doings of the merchant in the 'Shipman's Tale.' The fragment called the 'Cook's Tale' will give them an apprentice's London life that shall make even Jan Vincent's seem dull in comparison. The exquisite pictures and descriptions of rural life in England in the story of the 'Widow and her Two Daughters,'

who lost their Cock, will be found to want nothing in minuteness of detailed information that we could expect to derive from the pages of Miss Mitford. Lastly, would they replace with real ones the conventional names, conventional oaths, conventional styles of compliment, that they take such pains to fabricate under the impression they can ultimately produce the ring of the true antique metal, they may do so at pleasure by referring to Chaucer. Here is a list of genuine names for them culled from his works—Absalon, Simkin, John, Allen, Hodge, Roger, Jankin, Ralph, &c. Here a list of oaths:—St. Thomas, or “now help us, St. Frideswide,”—for a carpenter; “God wot” for a knight; St. Neot for a smith; St. Cuthbert for a collegian; St. Eloy—in common for a tender lady Prioress and a rough and ready carter; Sweet Saint Anne, for the anything but a Sweet Sumpnour; whilst for a very pretty exclamation for a feminine mouth suddenly startled, we find—“Holy cross of Bromeholme!”—the nunnery where the alarmed wife of a Miller has been educated. As to conversation, Chaucer will tell you the whole process from the commencement of an address to a company after dinner, when “lordings” took the place of the “gentlemen” of the present day, to the reply where a compliment has been paid to a lady—“Yea, God amend defaults, sir.”

But there were yet more important claims on the admiration and gratitude of the men of the fourteenth century. Chaucer was not only their restorer of learning, their great poet and teacher, their painter and historian in the highest sense of the words, but he was also their great religious Reformer—the literary Titan who could at once pull

down and build up with equal power and skill who made them despise and abhor wrong, fraud and vice, even though it were to be found in the highest places, and mixed up with the most powerful of institutions, without at the same time lessening their love and reverence for all that was true, noble, and holy that those same places or institutions might contain. And to say that Chaucer was a great religious reformer when the church had so mighty an influence in temporal as well as in spiritual matters, is to say he was also a great social and political reformer. We may be excused for here giving a few lines from his miscellaneous writings that may still more directly prove the poet was a patriot—and from his position in the court during so many years, necessarily an influential one. Let the reader remember the state of England during the reign of Richard II. and then ponder on the courage of him who could write thus in the ‘Ballad sent to King Richard

Truth is put down, reason is hold fable,
Virtue hath now no domination,
Pity is exiled, no man is merciable,
Through covetise is blent discretion,
The world hath made a permutacion
From right to wrong, from truth to fickleness,
That all is lost for lack of stedfastness ;

who could add,

Prince, desire to be honourable,
Cherish thy folk, and hate extortion, &c. ;

and, who could thus speak to all classes of men

Go forth, *King*, rule thee by sapience ;
Bishop be able to minister doctrine ;

Lord, to true counsel given audience ;
Womanhood, to chastity ever incline ;
Knight, let thy deedès worship détermine ;
 Be righteous, *Judge*, in saving thy name ;
Rich, do almess, lest thou lose bliss with shame.
People, obey your kinge and the law ;
Agè be ruled by good religion ;
True servant be dreadful, and keep thee under awe ;
 And thou *Poore*, fie on presumption ;
 Inobedience to *youth* is utter destruction.
 Remember you, how God hath set you—lo !
 And do your part, as ye be ordained to.

n a word, Chaucer alone was to England nearly
 ll that Boccaccio and Froissart, Petrarch and
 Dante, were to Italy and the neighbouring coun-
 tries about the same period.

And how stands the case between Chaucer and
 s—putting aside matters of a merely historical
 interest, what do we find he has done for us and
 posterity ? We may answer, with a pardonable
 exaggeration—Everything ! He founded alike our
 language and our literature, each act indeed being
 indispensable to the other. From the semi-bar-
 barous medley of Saxon and Norman French that
 existed when Chaucer began to write, he selected
 whatever his profound learning and perfect poetical
 taste taught him were best fitted for his purposes,
 and thus by his writings fixed and defined at once
 and for ever what had been previously in a state
 of continual fluxion and uncertainty.

How well, and therefore how completely, Chaucer
 did this, is strikingly evident when we compare his
 language with the language of him who is esteemed
 the most mechanically-perfect of modern English
 authors. Thus in the ‘ Merchant’s Tale ’ he makes
 January say,

CHAUCER.

Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree
 That blossometh ere the fruit ywaxen be;
 The blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead,
 I feel me nowhere hoar but on my head;
 Mine heart and all my limbès be as green
 As laurel through the year is for to seen.

Now what can be done to improve this by

POPE?

Think not my virtue lost, tho' time has shed
 These reverend honours on my hoary head;
 Thus trees are crown'd with blossoms white as snow
 The vital sap then rising from below;
 Old as I am, my lusty limbs appear
 Like winter greens that flourish all the year.

Many similar illustrations have been already given in our pages. And we need say no more to show that no very *essential* improvement in language can have taken place, when we see that Dryden and a Pope suffer so frequently by the contrast of their writings with Chaucer's originals.

And in saying Chaucer founded our language, we must not forget what mighty deductions must and may be involved in the statement. It is the *English* language of which this is said—the language that if ever any one tongue shall become the common familiar property of the world, it must be this!

Chaucer found his country without a literature; he left it rich in the possession of works, especially the 'Canterbury Tales,' that not only rival to this hour the greatest productions of human genius but that have *confessedly* influenced in a direct and powerful degree the minds of his most illustrious successors. Spenser has told us how he drank

Chaucer's "well of English undefiled;" Shakspeare has not only delighted to borrow individual character from him, as in his 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' where the Host is a frank imitation of Harry Bailly, but to be indebted to him greatly through one entire play, the 'Troilus and Cressida;' while Milton has with charming poetical earnestness expressed his heartfelt desire

To call up him who left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.

And, in conclusion, as the chief part of this literature, we think Chaucer has a powerful claim to be regarded as the true founder of our drama. *Its spirit is his to this hour:* the form alone was wanting—and for that the times he lived in were not prepared. What but the form of tragedy is wanting to the exquisite 'Pardoner's Tale?'—what but the *form* of the romantic drama is wanting to the 'Knight's Tale?'—what but the form of comedy in its highest vein is wanting to the 'Merchant's Tale?'—or to the whole body of *characters* that make up the 'Pilgrims of the Prologue?'—what but the form of farce is wanting to the 'Miller's' or the 'Reve's Tales?' Are not all these tales eminently—characteristically dramatic?—is there a single quality essential to the Drama absent?

THE END.

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